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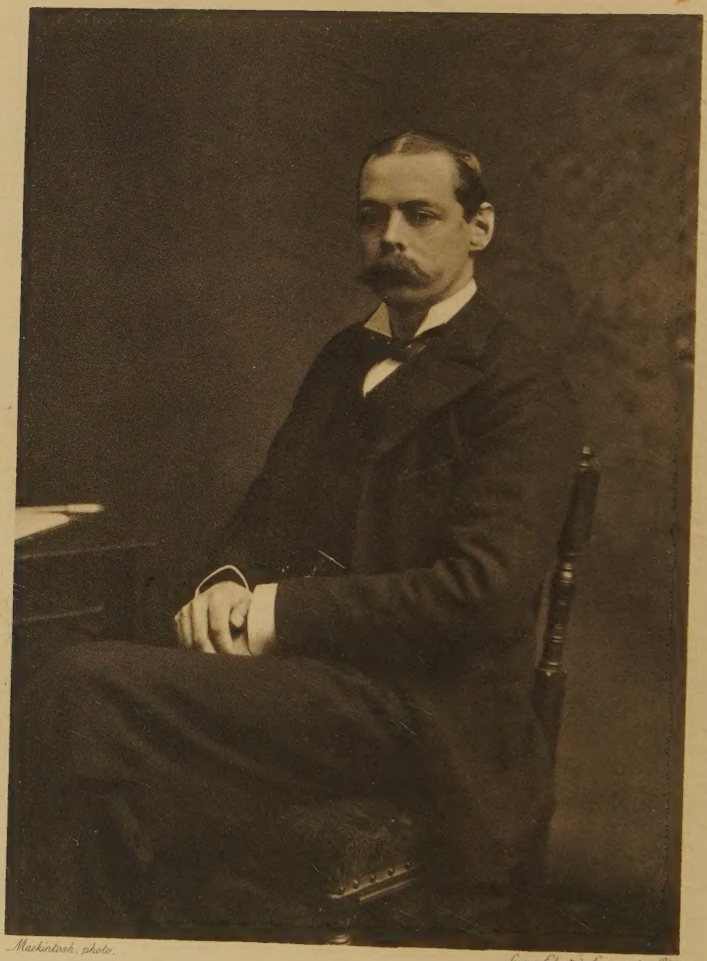

Mackintosh, photo. Swan Electric Engraving Co

Lord Randolph Churchill.

1883.

LORD RANDOLPH CHURCHILL

6683 38

BY

WINSTON SPENCER CHURCHILL, M.P.

AUTHOR OF
'THE STORY OF THE MALAKAND FIELD FORCE, 1897'
'THE RIVER WAR,' 'LONDON TO LADYSMITH VIA PRETORIA,' ETC.

B-
Churchill

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. I

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TO

CHARLES RICHARD JOHN SPENCER-CHURCHILL

DUKE OF MARLBOROUGH

THIS BOOK

IN ALL FAITHFUL FRIENDSHIP

IS INSCRIBED

Deed of Trust Regulating the Papers of the late Lord Randolph Churchill.

I, The Right Honourable Randolph Henry Spencer-Churchill, P.C., M.P., of 50 Grosvenor Square in the County of London by these Presents send Greeting Whereas I am possessed of various Political and State Documents Correspondence and Papers which are now contained in Tin boxes deposited in my name at the Westminster Branch of the London and Westminster Bank Limited and in Tin boxes and Drawers at No. 50 Grosvenor Square aforesaid Now I by These Presents do assign transfer and make over from and after the date of my decease the above mentioned political and State documents correspondence and papers unto George Richard Penn Viscount Curzon M.P., of 23 Upper Brook Street in the said County of London and Ernest William Beckett M.P., of 138 Piccadilly in the said County of London Upon Trust that they the said George Richard Penn Viscount Curzon and Ernest William Beckett shall from and after the date of my decease deal with and use the said Political and State documents correspondence and papers for any purpose which they in their absolute discretion may think well Provided that no such Political or State documents correspondence or paper relating either to the Department of the India Office or the Department of the Foreign Office shall be printed published or used in any way either directly or indirectly without the written consent of Her Majesty's Secretary of State for either of the said Departments for the time being And I Hereby Declare that these presents are executed by me in triplicate one Copy whereof is deposited

with the Right Honourable the Earl of Rosebery K.G., P.C., Her Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, the second Copy is deposited at the Western Branch of the Bank of England, Burlington Gardens in the name of my Solicitor Mr. Theodore Lumley and the third Copy is retained by me

As WITNESS my hand and seal this eighth day of March One thousand eight hundred and ninety-three.

Signed Sealed and Delivered by the above named Randolph Henry Spencer-Churchill in the presence of } RANDOLPH S. CHURCHILL.

THEODORE LUMLEY,
Solicitor,
37 Conduit Street, Bond Street, W.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

In the spring of 1893 Lord Randolph Churchill, feeling that he had slender expectations of long life, placed all his papers, private and official, under a trust-deed which consigned them at his death to the charge of two of his most intimate political friends, Viscount Curzon (now Earl Howe) and Mr. Ernest Beckett (now Lord Grimthorpe). As he made a practice of preserving almost every letter he received, the number of documents was sufficient to fill eleven considerable tin boxes. Subject to the conditions prescribed in the trust-deed in regard to matters affecting the India Office or the Foreign Office — which have, of course, been strictly observed — these papers were placed in my hands by my father's literary executors in July 1902, for the purpose of my writing a full account of his life and work. I am deeply sensible of the confidence implied and of the honour conveyed in that commission, and during the three and a half years which have passed since I accepted it, I have diligently laboured — in spite of some political distractions — to discharge it to the best of my ability.

Sir Michael Hicks-Beach (having consulted with the late Lord Salisbury) and Lord Rosebery have expressed the opinion that the story of Lord Randolph

Churchill's life may now be fully told without impropriety towards individuals or the public. Indeed, it is high time to do so. Lord Randolph's part in national affairs is not to be measured by long years of office. No great legislation stands in his name upon the statute book. He was a Chancellor of the Exchequer without a Budget, a Leader of the House of Commons but for a single session, a victor without the spoils. No tangible or enduring records — unless it be the Burma province — exist of his labours, and the great and decisive force which he exerted upon the history of the Conservative and Unionist party might be imperfectly realised by a later generation, unless it were explained, asserted, and confirmed by the evidence of those who came in contact or collision with his imperious and vivifying personality.

For a thing so commonly attempted, political biography is difficult. The style and ideas of the writer must throughout be subordinated to the necessity of embracing in the text those documentary proofs upon which the story depends. Letters, memoranda, and extracts from speeches, which inevitably and rightly interrupt the sequence of his narrative, must be pieced together upon some consistent and harmonious plan. It is not by the soft touches of a picture, but in hard mosaic or tessellated pavement, that a man's life and fortunes must be presented in all their reality and romance. I have thought it my duty, so far as possible, to assemble once and for all the whole body of historical evidence required for the understanding of Lord Randolph Churchill's career. Scarcely anything of material consequence has been omitted, and such omissions as have been

necessary are made for others' sakes and not his own. Scarcely any statement of importance lacks documentary proof. There is nothing more to tell. Wherever practicable I have endeavoured to employ his own words in the narration; and the public is now in a position to pronounce a complete, if not a final, judgment.

I have been fortunate in the abundance of the materials supplied me. In addition to Lord Randolph Churchill's tin boxes with their ample stores, there was at hand an invaluable series of scrap-books, containing every conceivable newspaper comment and cartoon, collected by his sister, Lady Wimborne, and covering the whole period of his active political life. But most of all I am indebted to those many friends, irrespective of political party, who either by allowing their letters to be printed, or by reading the proof-sheets, have enabled me to compile what may, without presumption, be called an authoritative account. I accept, of course, in the fullest sense, exclusive responsibility for whatever is written here; but to Sir Michael Hicks-Beach, first of all, my grateful acknowledgments are due, for not only has he with the greatest care and pains thoroughly revised the whole book, but furnished me, besides, with extensive memoranda in respect of those chapters with the events of which he was specially concerned.

The biographer of an English statesman is often able to conduct his hero prosperously through the recognised educational experiences, and to instal him at an early age in some small office, whence his promotion in due course is assured. It is otherwise with the life of Lord Randolph Churchill. No

smooth path of patronage was opened to him. No glittering wheels of royal favour aided and accelerated his journey. Whatever power he acquired was grudgingly conceded and hastily snatched away. Like Disraeli, he had to fight every mile in all his marches. And this account will, I think, be found to explain in almost mechanical detail the steps and the forces by which he rose to the exercise of great personal authority, as well as the converse process by which he declined.

I have naturally been led to deal more fully with his public career than with his private life. With the exception of the first two chapters and the last, this story lies in a period of only ten years — from 1880 to 1890, and not less than half of its compass is concerned with the succession of fierce political crises which disturbed the years 1885 and 1886. The epoch is brief; but so crowded is it with incident and accident, so full of insights and sidelights upon the workings of party and constitutional machinery in modern times, that it deserves the closest examination. And I hope it may be attributed to the author's failings, and not to the actions and character of Lord Randolph Churchill, if the reader is not attracted by an authentic drama of the House of Commons.

WINSTON SPENCER CHURCHILL.

BLENHEIM PALACE, WOODSTOCK:
November 1, 1905.

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TO

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'Heard are the voices,
Heard are the sages,
The worlds and the ages:
"Choose well; your choice is
Brief and yet endless.

Here eyes do regard you,
In Eternity's stillness:
Here is all fulness,
Ye brave, to reward you;
Work and despair not."'

—*Goethe.*

CHAPTER I

EARLY YEARS

The cumulative labours of Vanbrugh and 'Capability' Brown have succeeded at Blenheim in setting an Italian palace in an English park without apparent incongruity. The combination of these different ideas, each singly attractive, produces a remarkable effect. The palace is severe in its symmetry and completeness. Nothing has been added to the original plan; nothing has been taken away. The approaches are formal; the wings are balanced; four equal towers maintain its corners; and the fantastic ornaments of one side are elaborately matched on the other. Natural simplicity and even confusion are, on the contrary, the characteristic of the park and gardens. Instead of that arrangement of gravel paths, of geometrical flower-beds, and of yews disciplined with grotesque exactness which the character of the house would seem to suggest, there spreads a rich and varied landscape. Green lawns and shining water, banks of laurel and fern, groves of oak and cedar, fountains and islands, are conjoined in artful disarray to offer on every side a

promise of rest and shade. And yet there is no violent contrast, no abrupt dividing-line between the wildness and freshness of the garden and the pomp of the architecture.

The whole region is as rich in history as in charm; for the antiquity of Woodstock is not measured by a thousand years, and Blenheim is heir to all the memories of Woodstock. Here Kings — Saxon, Norman, and Plantagenet — have held their Courts. Ethelred the Unready, Alfred the Great, Queen Eleanor, the Black Prince, loom in vague majesty out of the past. Woodstock was notable before the Norman Conquest. It was already a borough when the Domesday Book was being compiled. The park was walled to keep the foreign wild beasts of Henry I. Fair Rosamond's Well still bubbles by the lake. From the gatehouse of the old manor the imprisoned Princess Elizabeth watched the years of Mary's persecution. In the tumults of the Civil Wars Woodstock House was held for King Charles by an intrepid officer through a long and bitter siege and ravaged by the victorious Roundheads at its close. And beyond the most distant of these events, in the dim backward of time, the Roman generals administering the districts east and west of Akeman Street had built their winter villas in that pleasant, temperate retreat; so that Woodstock and its neighbourhood were venerable and famous long before John Churchill, in the early years of the eighteenth century, superimposed upon it the glory of his victories over the French.

Randolph Henry Spencer-Churchill, commonly called Lord Randolph Churchill, was born in London on February 13, 1849. His father was the eldest son of the sixth Duke of Marlborough by his first wife, Lady Jane Stewart, daughter of George, eighth Earl of Galloway. The Marquess of Blandford, as he then was, had married on July 12, 1843, the Lady Frances Anne Emily Vane (of whom more hereafter), eldest daughter of the third Marquess of Londonderry, by whom he had five sons and six daughters. Of these sons three died in infancy, the elder of the survivors ultimately succeeded to the title, and the younger is the subject of this account. 1849

In his father's lifetime Lord Blandford lived at Hensington House, an unpretentious building outside the circumference of the Blenheim Park wall and about half a mile from the palace. Here his numerous family were brought up. Their childhood must have been a very happy one, with such a fine and ample place for a playground, many dear playmates and parents who watched over them with unremitting care. The boy grew up with his brother and sisters, as little boys are wont to do; and when his father became, in 1857, seventh Duke of Marlborough, they all moved into the palace at the other end of the great avenue, and this became for many years their home. Randolph was sent to Mr. Tabor's school at Cheam when he was eight years old. This was very young for one who had so much space and happiness at home; but he seems to have been most kindly treated and to have been quite content. He did not

1857
Æt. 8

prove exceptionally clever at his letters, though he made steady progress at school. He had an excellent memory, and was fond of reading books of history, biography, and adventure. But much more pronounced than any liking for study were his passion for sport and his love of animals. By the time he was nine years old he rode well, and even at that early age he showed decision and determination in his ways. In those days the telegraph was some miles distant from Blenheim and the telegraph boy used to ride in with his messages upon a ragged, wiry little pony called 'The Mouse.' Once he had seen this pony, Lord Randolph wearied his father and family with requests to buy it and never rested till it was his own. After the pony was purchased, he trained it and called it his hunter. The next step was to go hunting.

On an autumn afternoon in 1859 he waylaid Colonel Thomas, the tenant of Woodstock House and an old and valued friend of the family, on his return from a day with the Heythrop hounds, and, riding up to him, persuaded him to ask his father's permission to take him out hunting. This was the beginning of a friendship between these two which lasted through life. To the next meet of the Heythrop they accordingly repaired together. The day was fortunate. Lord Randolph, carried to the front by 'The Mouse,' was in at the death in King's Wood, was presented with brush or pad, went through the ceremony of being 'blooded,' and returned home in great delight, with glowing cheeks well besmeared with fox's blood. From that day

he became passionately fond not merely of riding to hounds but of hunting as an art. 1860 Æt. 11

A glimpse of his later days at Cheam has been preserved by a schoolboy friend who, early in 1860, under the fostering wing of an elder brother, was entered as the youngest and newest of sixty-two boarders at the school. 'Randolph Churchill,' he writes, 'was then very near, and before he left I think he reached, the headship of the school. He and my brother were "chums," whereby I was brought into closer touch with him than otherwise would have been the case. His good-natured and somewhat magnificent patronage of my shivering novitiate has imprinted on my memory a few incidents characteristic of his personality. At any rate, he must have bulked large in my regard, as I have of him a far more vivid recollection than of any other boy, through the whole six years of my Cheam schooling.

'From the nature of the case my recollections are not of the class room. He was in "the first class," as the top form was styled; I was in "the sixth," or lowest. The general muster in the big schoolroom, or the recreations of the playground, were the scenes in which I chiefly saw him; and, of course, whatever of his doings I noticed, are glamoured by the small boy's reverence for the big. I cannot "place" him in either cricket or football; but there are some things with which he is in my memory so closely associated that I cannot even now see their like without recalling him in liveliest imagination. Thus I can never see children playing at "horses" without

1860 Æt. 11

the instant recollection of the showy four-in-hand which Randolph Churchill "tooled" round the playground, or of which he was an interchangeable part. Besides himself the team and coachman consisted of Curzon, Suirdale (afterwards Lord Donoughmore), and the two brothers Gordon (one of whom is now Lord Aberdeen). The harness with which they were caparisoned belonged, I remember, to the elder Gordon. But in my recollection Randolph Churchill shares with him pre-eminence in the quintette. There was a large magnificence about his Cheam days that impressed me with the idea that, no matter how well another boy might acquit himself, Randolph Churchill would always "go one better."

'He was always ready with some surprise in the Sunday texts and exercises for which Mr. Tabor assembled us in big school on Sunday afternoons. I can never open the book of Ecclesiastes without recalling the breathless astonishment with which I heard him recite, with that vehemence he always showed in speech, those eight verses which tell us that "to every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven." For me Churchill achieved a wonder. No boy, and I should think hardly a man, is likely to have much more than an abstract and somewhat perfunctory interest in the Thirty-nine Articles. But I can never glance at the sombre sentences of the Article on Predestination and Election without the passages ringing with his declamation as he repeated the whole, *ore rotundo*,

without hesitation or the tremor of an eyelash. At that time there was at Cheam one of those holy and blameless boys who come sometimes to sanctify the rough brutalities of schoolboy life. He was Mackworth Dolben, from Finedon, in Northants, where his memory is still kept green. He used once a week to assemble in his cubicle a few of us, with whom he would read the Bible and pray. He had enrolled my brother in the *coterie*, and through my brother, myself. Churchill was one of the little band; and I can see him now, kneeling down by the bed, with his face in his hands resting on the white coverlet, leading us in fervent prayer. 1860 ÆT. 11

'I have alluded to his vehemence of speech; but I should be wrong if I were thought to mean violence of language. He always at that time spoke open-mouthed, with a full voice and great rapidity of utterance, as if his thoughts came faster than his words could follow; the impression conveyed being that he was determined to overbear all opposition and gain the mastery of argument.

'Once when I had disfigured an Ovid which I had borrowed from my brother, who came to reproach me in the playground, it was Churchill who convinced me of the enormity of my offence, and it is his eager and animated face that lives in my memory of the little scene. There was, I think, in my boyish mind (I was little more than eight, and I never saw him after he left Cheam) a distinct, if indefinite, sense of vigour, fluency, masterfulness, and good-nature in his character. Living, as boys do, in the

1863 Æt. 14

present, I am sure that I had no idea of his after-fame.'

When Lord Randolph was in his fourteenth year he went in due course to Eton, where he was placed in the form known as 'Remove,' and in the house of the Rev. W. A. Carter. A year later he was moved into Mr. Frewer's house, and there continued while at Eton. His career henceforward was chequered, for he had already developed a will of his own and a considerable facility in expressing it. I submit to the reader the first extracts from the many letters which this story will contain:—

Lord Randolph to his Mother.

Eton College, Windsor, 1863.

I am very sorry I did not write you before, but I wrote one letter to you and I cannot find it anywhere, and I have not had a bit of time since, for I had to bring a hundred lines every day to Mr. —— for cutting my name on the new table in the new schools. Mr. —— is such a horrid man; I had one or two punishments for him yesterday and I put them in his pupil room and somebody must have taken them away for he said he never saw them. He has been rude too; he called me a 'little blackguard' the other day just because I was sitting with my legs on the form, and he is always calling the fellows names. I shall never do any good with him, he is so unjust.

There is smallpox in the barracks and half Eton is being vaccinated. They offered to perform on me, but I declined. The Queen came to Windsor from Osborne on Thursday night and rushed off on Friday morning to Balmoral, which struck me as being rather eccentric. There has not been much going on here, though they have had a grand reformation

of the rifle corps. They made everybody re-enlist and they had to take a sort of oath and sign their names to a lot of nonsense. 1863 ÆT. 14

And another: —

To his Father.

Eton College: March 11, 1863.

It was not my fault that my letter did not reach you before, for I gave it to the servant the same day to post, and she forgot all about it. I have written to you about the reception on Saturday; I will now tell you about the fireworks on Monday and the wedding yesterday.

On Monday night we were all ordered to be present in the school-yard at nine o'clock. When we were all there we formed fours and marched up Windsor with a large body of police before us (which rather spoilt the fun) to clear the way. Then we got into the Home Park by the South Western Station, just under the windows of the State Rooms, and there we stood all the time the fireworks were going on. I luckily had the forethought to take my great-coat, or else I do not believe I should have got home, it was so dreadfully cold. The fireworks were very pretty, only there was such an awful lot of rockets and too few catherine-wheels and all that sort of fun.

The Princess Alexandra having never seen fireworks before, they were on Monday night instead of on Tuesday night, because she wanted to see them. We did not get home till nearly twelve o'clock. There was no illumination that night. Yesterday morning was a whole holiday without any early school or chapel. We were all mustered in the school-yard about eleven o'clock, and then marched up Windsor into the Castle by Henry the VIIIth's gate. There we had to stand for a tremendous time without anything coming. (It luckily was fine and not very cold.) At last the first procession came; it was the King of Denmark and all those people. We had a beautiful view of all the people. Then we had to

1863 — Æt. 14

wait about a quarter of an hour, and then came the Princess Royal. She was sitting on our side, and she bowed away as hard as she could go. (I think her neck must have been stiff.) And then came the Prince; he looked extremely gracious. I never saw him put his hat on, and he held it about an inch from his head, and kept bowing, always in the same place. And last of all came the Princess. And then there was such a row, in spite of the Queen's express commands that there was to be no cheering. I never heard such an awful noise in all my life. I think, if the Queen heard it, she must have had a headache for a long time afterwards. We were not allowed to go into the chapel, or into the courtyard by the chapel. A whole lot of us charged the policemen and soldiers to get in, but it was no use; they managed to keep us back that time. But we had our revenge afterwards. After they had come back we went back into college. Then at three o'clock we all came to see the Princess go away. She did not come till about a quarter past four in the afternoon — the Prince and Princess in an open carriage; and then came the squashing. We all rushed after the carriage. (I was right in the front of the charge; it was a second Balaclava.) Nothing stood before us; the policemen charged in a body, but they were knocked down. There was a chain put across the road, but we broke that; several old *genteel* ladies tried to stop me, but I snapped my fingers in their face and cried 'Hurrah!' and 'What larks!' I frightened some of them horribly. There was a wooden palisade put up at the station (it was the Great Western), but we broke it down; and there, to my unspeakable grief, I was bereaved of a portion of my clothing, viz. my hat. Somebody knocked it off. I could not stop to pick it up. I shrieked out a convulsive 'Oh, my hat!' and was then borne on. I got right down to the door of the carriage where the Prince of Wales was, wildly shouting 'Hurrah!' He bowed to me, I am perfectly certain; but I shrieked louder. I am sure, if the Princess did not possess very strong nerves, she would have been frightened; but all she did was to smile blandly. At last the train moved

1863
ÆT. 14

off while the band played 'God save the Queen.' I am sure I wonder there were no accidents, we were all so close to the carriage. There I was, left in the station, 'hatless.' I met Lord Churchill there, who told me Lady Churchill was in waiting. I was introduced to lots of soldiers by one of the masters who caught me. And then I began to search for my hat; but it was in vain, for I never saw it again. I was told to get another one, for I had no other to wear. At last I got home, and in the evening we went out again to see the illumination. There was not much to see. I think I have given you a full account of the wedding and the reception.

Believe me ever to remain
Your affectionate son,
RANDOLPH CHURCHILL.

P.S. — My holidays begin on the 27th of March.

The letters which Lord Randolph received from his father during these Eton years were affectionate and pleasant, and were evidently intended to exert a considerable influence upon his education. Besides ordinary family news and the accounts of sport, of partridges and pheasants, of the health of dogs and ponies, of the exertions of the Heythrop hounds — always industrious, and sometimes successful — there was generally allusion to some more serious or public event, a political opinion, an account of an election at Woodstock, or a few sentences about Mr. Disraeli. Often the Duke would take pains to impart a lesson in conduct under the guise of information. 'Your aunt,' wrote this devout, yet not intolerant, man, 'who is with us now is most unhappy; for I fear she is a Roman Catholic at heart, and does not like to say so. If this be true, it would be much better for her to declare her mind;

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and then, of course, however we might be grieved, the matter would never be alluded to in conversation.' He encouraged his son always to confide in him; nothing mattered so much as what could not be told; and when it was necessary, as it often was, to reprove some schoolboy misdemeanour — pert speeches to masters, an overbearing manner, the unwarranted fagging of small companions, or the breaking of other people's windows — he never founded his rebukes upon authority; but always upon reason, arguing the matter quite fairly with his son, pointing out to him the consequences of his actions, and appealing to his good sense, his self-respect, and the love and honour in which he held his parents. The care and patience thus displayed were not unrepaid, and both Lord Randolph and his elder brother, throughout lives strongly marked by an attitude of challenge towards men and things, preserved at all times an old-world reverence for their father.

Considering that mischief and a disposition to argue were the gravest crimes imputed to the boy, the paternal rebukes were frequently rather severe. They followed, if I may judge by old letters, a regular course. First, on receiving the bad report, the father would, with much deliberation, ask his son what he had to say in defence or in excuse. Lord Randolph would reply with a long, carefully-written letter of justification, defending himself with freedom and ingenuity. Next the Duke, now duly in possession of both sides of the case, would take up his largest pen and deliver majestic censure. 'To tell you the

Eton.

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Oxford.

truth,' he wrote on one occasion, 'I fear that you yourself are very impatient and resentful of any control; and while you stand upon some fancied right or injury, you fail to perceive what is your *duty*, and allow both your language and manner a most improper scope.' The third stage of these estrangements would be a frank letter of submission and promises for future improvement, after which complete forgiveness and the return of sunshine. 1863 ÆT. 14

These are simple chronicles, and I have tried, so far as possible, to use the actual words in which they have come to me; but it is well to notice how early a strong, masterful character develops. How much can parents really do? One would think that the future lay in their hands. They are at the beginning supreme. They control with authority, from which there is no appeal, all early impressions and actions and every avenue of experience. It would not be strange if they could shape and mould the child according to their fancies. Is it not, on the contrary, wonderful how comparatively powerless they so often are? The tiny child, scarcely out of the cradle, asserts his personality. This schoolboy, pausing unembarrassed on the threshold of life, has made up his mind already. Nothing will change him much. Lord Randolph's letters as a boy are his letters as a man. The same vigour of expression; the same simple, yet direct, language; the same odd, penetrating flashes; the same coolly independent judgments about people and laws, and readiness to criticise both as if it were a right; the same vein

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of humour and freedom from all affectation; the same knack of giving nicknames, which often stuck and sometimes stung — all are there. His mind, indeed, gained knowledge and experience from instruction; but his essential character, changing hardly at all by contact with the world, unfolded with remorseless and unalterable persistency, as every seed brings forth in its proper season its own peculiar flower.

'He had,' wrote his mother a few months before her death, 'a wonderful faculty for making firm friends, who remained through life devoted to him. He was very constant and decided in his attachments, and outspoken — often imprudently — in his likes or dislikes. He was always pertinacious in his opinions. He never wavered in his plans, and, whether right or wrong, he carried them out. This enabled him to succeed in life, but also often brought him into trouble. . . . When I look back in sadness to his youth, and remember his ready wit, his warm affection, his bright spirits, and his energy in carrying out any undertaking, I feel how great was the want of foresight and intellect on my part in his training and management; for one of his most endearing qualities was extraordinary affection for his father and me, and his constant interest and pride in his family from his earliest days. . . . Alas!' she wrote in unmerited self-reproach, 'had I been a clever woman, I must have had more ability to curb and control his impulses, and I should have taught him patience and moderation. Yet at times he had ex-

traordinary good judgment, and it was only on rare occasions that he took the bit between his teeth, and then there was no stopping him.' 1863 ÆT. 14

Lord Randolph himself seems to have dreamed no dreams at Eton. He lived, with his faithful bull-dog, entirely in the present, obeying with spontaneity the varied impulses of a boisterous yet amiable nature. 'He was,' we are told, 'an easy lower boy to catch, for his whereabouts could be ascertained by his incessant peals of laughter. There was not a boy in the school who laughed so much or whose laughter was so contagious. There was scarcely one who was so frolicsome. His preferred method of descending a staircase was to skate down it with a rush; and if he had to enter the room of another lower boy, he would sooner bound against the door and force it open with his shoulder than go through the stale formality of turning the handle.'[1] He is furthermore described as 'very fond of collisions with "cads"' when there was any event drawing crowds at Eton or Windsor; but 'he would single out antagonists much older or bigger than himself.'

Two other fleeting impressions have been preserved.[2] 'I can just remember young Churchill,' writes a well-known Eton authority, 'as a striking, whimsical personality, with full, large, round, astonished eyes and a determined bull-dog type of face. He was addicted to dressing loudly, and I vividly

[1] *Seven Years at Eton*, Brinsley Richards, p. 377.

[2] *Randolph Spencer-Churchill*, by T. H. S. Escott, M.A. (Hutchinson & Co., 1895).

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recollect his appearance one day in a daring violet-coloured waistcoat. Botham's Hotel was in those days a favourite resort for Etonians, in the way of succession to Coningsby's "Christopher," where the friends entertained each other at sumptuous breakfasts and luncheons. A special feature of this hostelry, as well as a powerful attraction to the younger boys, was a spacious fruit-garden, celebrated for the size and flavour of its strawberries. During a certain summer this Elysian enclosure was so pillaged as to cause the proprietor to complain to the headmaster, Mr. Balston. As a consequence Mr. Austen Leigh was despatched to watch, and, if possible, to catch the offenders *in flagrante delicto*. That representative of the highest Eton authority very soon flushed a large covey of juvenile depredators. All of them, however, got away, except Randolph Churchill, who jumped as far as he could towards the road with his pursuer close upon him. They both fell together into the ditch, Mr. Austen Leigh uppermost. Lord Randolph, seeing that any further attempt at escape would be useless, crawled out, much scratched and bruised, into the middle of the road, where, incensed at his own discomfiture, he deliberately sat down, crossed his legs, glared at Mr. Leigh, and with all the vehemence of enraged fourteen, exclaimed, "You beast!" How he escaped the birch after this adventure tradition does not relate.'

'I can recall him at Eton,' wrote 'J. S.' in the *Realm* of March 1895, 'but only for one amazing

moment. It was a summer evening, just before "lock-up," and the whole wall, the little old wall so fitted for the height of small boys, which separates the public road from the borders of Upper School, was thronged with youths, resting after the labours of the day. Even they felt the charm of the stillness. There was no drumming of heels on the wall, only chatter and occasional laughter. On the other side of the road, gathered at the top of Keate's Lane, where in those days was an iron bar for the "seat of the scornful," were the "Swells." Between these awe-inspiring *aristoi* and us urchins indiscriminate on the wall lay the empty road. Down the middle of that road alone, ringing discordant music from a Volunteer's bugle, marched a boy in jackets. It was Churchill, wending homeward to Frewer's. As I recall the "Swells" of that time, this progress of a boy in jackets, on his right a long line of his fellows, on his left, for one awful minute, that sublime group at the corner, I feel once more the breathless wonder at audacity so magnificent.' 1863 ÆT. 14

I cannot set down with exactness the time when Lord Randolph's parents began to realise that their son possessed and was, underneath an exuberance of animal spirits, developing character and qualities of an unusual order; but, at any rate, before he left Eton they had begun to hope that some considerable career lay before him. Henceforth they neglected nothing that might stimulate his interest or his ambition. A degree at Oxford in history and law,

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suitable and extended tours on the Continent, frequent contact with men of affairs, seemed the most obvious steps which were first required in preparation for political life. And meanwhile the family borough of Woodstock was watched by the Duke with a jealous and reflective eye. Its representation had lately caused him for various reasons many heart-burnings.

Woodstock possessed a Parliamentary history of such curious distinction that perhaps no other seat in England could rival the interest of its chequered fortunes. From the earliest beginnings of popular representation to the Reform Bill of 1832, it had returned, with some intermission, two members to the House of Commons; and among these William Lenthall, the famous Speaker, was its representative in the Long Parliament; William Eden, afterwards the first Lord Auckland and Governor-General of India, sat for it in the Parliament of 1774; Charles Abbot, also Speaker, in 1802; Sir John Gladstone, father of the famous Prime Minister, in 1820; and the great philanthropist, better known as the seventh Earl of Shaftesbury, from 1826 to 1830. Down to the time of Queen Anne the members for Woodstock had most often been drawn from the old families of the neighbourhood; but after the delivery of the Manor of New Woodstock to John, first Duke of Marlborough, and the building of Blenheim, the seat practically became the property of the Churchills and its representatives were uniformly the nominees of the reigning Duke.

This dominion, though always maintained, was not seldom challenged; and the bitter and unscrupulous contests which were fought when some Indian nabob or other wealthy champion made an effort to wrest the borough from the great local influences under whose shadow it reposed were an almost incredible source of profit to the electors. 1863 Æt. 14

In April 1844 Lord Randolph's father, then Marquess of Blandford, was elected member. Although always a staunch Conservative, he immediately developed progressive tendencies in social and economic questions and became a steady supporter of Free Trade measures. This speedily brought him into collision with the Duke, whose interest in the Corn Laws was by no means theoretical; and since he remained altogether unyielding, he was forced in April 1845 to apply for the Chiltern Hundreds and to retire from Parliament. The vacancy was filled (May 1) by Viscount Loftus, a trusty Protectionist; and on his becoming Marquess of Ely, in December, Lord Alfred Churchill was brought forward without opposition in his stead. The question of the Corn Laws having been swept into the past by the decisions of Parliament in 1846, domestic differences were once more composed, and at the General Election of 1847 Lord Blandford was again elected, and continued to sit for the borough at the General Elections of July 1852 and March 1857, until in July 1857 he succeeded as seventh Duke of Marlborough.

Lord Alfred Churchill, his brother, now became

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again the member for Woodstock. For two years all had been smooth and satisfactory; but after the General Election of 1859, and during the year 1860, Lord Alfred began to manifest an increasing sympathy with the Whigs and Liberals, and finally became ranged with the supporters of Lord Palmerston. His vote in favour of Mr. Gladstone's famous Budget of 1860 was the first definite step and it instantly drew a strong protest from the Duke, who seems to have been less an admirer — after succeeding to great position and estate — both of political independence and of Free Trade measures. Lord Alfred explained that he considered his vote perfectly consistent with his character as a Conservative. 'I really should like to know,' replied his brother severely, 'by what change of terms a measure can be called "Conservative" which substitutes direct for indirect taxation, which has been prepared by Mr. Cobden, proposed by Mr. Gladstone, and is the avowed policy of a Liberal Government.' The correspondence was not on either side so couched as to repair the differences which had opened between the brothers, and Lord Alfred's subsequent conduct produced a complete estrangement. The Duke, a stalwart Churchman, had long been warmly interested in the question of Church Rates. They were to him a pet and special subject and he had publicly expressed on various occasions a high Tory view. Lord Alfred now began to give Church Rates his careful attention, and, as the result of his studies, he proceeded to introduce into the House of Commons a Bill dealing

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with the whole subject in an extremely Liberal — not to say Radical — spirit. He expounded his plan with elaboration in a letter and forwarded it with his Bill to his brother as a suggested 'compromise' greatly to be desired in the public interest. This was decisive. The Duke replied that he understood an affront was intended, and that he hoped, whatever line of politics Lord Alfred might pursue in the future, he would not consider it necessary to consult him upon it. Through the medium of various persons it was presently arranged that, as no one could force Lord Alfred to retire, he should be free to act as he pleased till the General Election; and that at the election, as the Duke would once more be the master of the situation, another candidate should be brought forward. There the matter rested, to the extreme dissatisfaction of both parties. So embittered were the relations between the brothers that, when the departing Lord Alfred was entertained by his constituents in Woodstock in 1864, the Duke would not attend the dinner, but sent Lord Randolph in his place; and this schoolboy of fifteen, with impressive gravity and unfaltering utterance, delivered — or, rather, recited — the necessary speeches, and so made, under rather a lowering sky, his first embarkation upon the uncertain waters of party politics.

In 1867 Lord Randolph left Eton in order to obtain some education from a private tutor before going to Oxford. In spite of these precautions his first attempt to pass the entrance examination was

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unsuccessful; and it was arranged that he should work for six months under the care of an accomplished clergyman, the Rev. Lionel Dawson Damer, who lived at Cheddington, near Aylesbury.

Lord Randolph to his Father.

Cheddington: March, 1867.

I wrote to you in my last that we did not intend to go to Oxford, but we changed our minds and went yesterday. It was a horrid day, snowing and blowing from the East, and dreadfully cold. As we were getting into the train we met Mr. —— to whom you offered the living at Waddesdon. He seemed really a charming man, so very gentlemanlike and quiet. I am sure you would like him very much. He tells me he had at first declined the living, but now, having seen it, he thought that if certain things were done he would accept it, if you had not offered it to anyone else already. He wants to get back into this neighbourhood, and really I should think he would be a capital person from all Mr. Damer says, and from what I saw. I asked Mr. Damer to go and call upon Dr. Scott. I thought he might find out something about me. Dr. Scott told him a different story from what he told you. He said that my papers as a whole gave the Dons the idea that I made tremendous guesses at everything, and that they thought they could not on that let me in. He said nothing about the essay at all. I do not think he is much to be relied on.

We also called upon Dr. Marsham. He was very civil and seemed to be pleased at our calling. He was very glad he said at your taking office, and said he would be able to offer me rooms in October, so I think we did no harm by calling, but that he thought it very civil. I only saw Dalmeny and Donoughmore, everyone else was out.

I think General Peel's speech very clear and intelligible. I suppose he will be a much greater loss than Lord Carnarvon

or Lord Cranborne. How very troublesome the Fenians are! I suppose you have complete information now about it all. I am afraid the Whigs are getting very disagreeable, but I hope their machinations will not succeed. I think Dizzy gave it to Gladstone well. 1867 ÆT. 18

I am going out with the Harriers to-morrow.

Lord Randolph to his Father.

Cheddington: March, 1867.

I must say I think it very kind of Dr. Marsham letting us know so soon that he can give me a room, for he said nothing about a chance vacancy, so that I expect he has made some other arrangement.

I cannot tell you how delighted I was when you wrote and told me that you had accepted the office of Lord President of the Council. I think it is just the office that you would like best. Do you know who is to be Lord Steward? Do you at all expect a split in the Cabinet? I do hope you will be able to do something now, as it seems perhaps that the Conservatives have been placed in rather a humiliating position. I am so glad you are in the Cabinet; but Mr. Damer and I look forward to a change in the Cabinet policy.

There has been very little to do here. I assisted Mr. Damer at some penny readings the other night in the school here, as he had been thrown over by a clergyman he had asked to come and read. I read 'Reminiscences of Margot' and the 'Ingoldsby Legends.' They were very much applauded. Mr. Damer and I have got a charming plan, I think you will approve of it. He says that after the 20th of June, which is the Choral Festival at Aylesbury of which he has the management, he will be quite free, and we thought we might make a very pleasant trip abroad for two months, beginning about July to the end of August, if you did not mind. I should have passed the examination for Merton and just come back in time for the October term. Mr. Damer says he would like it very much. But should you mind?

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Do you think you would be able to run down here some Saturday afternoon and stay Sunday? I am afraid you will have a tremendous lot to do now. I wish I could be your Secretary.

The Continental tour commended itself to the Duke, and Lord Randolph was allowed to roam through Switzerland and Italy at his pleasure for two or three months. On his return he matriculated and took up his residence at Merton, under the tutelage of Dr. Creighton, afterwards Bishop of London. It must have been with relief and satisfaction that he exchanged the rough bigotry of school life for the free and generous atmosphere of a famous University. At Eton he had gained neither distinction in games nor profit from studies. He had learned to row and swim, without aspiring to renown; and as for cricket and football, he heartily detested them both. But Oxford opened opportunities of all kinds. Its proximity to Blenheim enabled him to live practically at home. The happy companionship of his family and the sporting possibilities of a landed estate were both within easy and constant reach. His nature responded to the glory and romance of Oxford; and in its cloistered courts, so rich in youth and history, he found a scheme of life more varied, tolerant, and real than any he had ever known.

Meanwhile Lord Randolph had long outgrown 'The Mouse'; and even while an Eton boy, upon a new and quickly distinguished animal called 'Pill-box,' with occasional mounts from his elder sisters, he had begun in his holidays to acquire some glory

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in the Oxfordshire fields. He is described at sixteen as 'a very bold and good horseman, who also took the greatest interest in the hunting.' Aided as he was by the light weight of youth and his native knowledge of the country, few in the hunt could beat him. His love of the art of venery grew into worship. At fifteen the ownership of two beagles, the gift of his father, transported him with delight. They proved the humble forerunners of a pack which is not yet forgotten in Oxfordshire. Within the next two years he became possessed of 'two or three hounds, kept in some pigsties at the back of the gardens, under the care of a somewhat ragged and disreputable "Boy Jim," whom he called his "whipper-in,"' and of an old retired keeper — one of the Duke's pensioners — who, with his wife, discharged the duties of 'feeder.' But it was not till he went to Merton, in the autumn of 1867, that he aspired to a higher state and created, in all the serious purpose of nine couple of hounds and the pomp of 'a whip well mounted and in livery,' the celebrated 'Blenheim Harriers.' September 21, 1867, is the first entry in his hunting-book, thenceforward kept with the utmost regularity throughout the three years of his Oxford life.

Date	Horses	Hounds	Weather	Meet	Hares Killed
Sept. 21, 1867	Lady Di	7½ couple	Cloudy, rain overhead	Bladon toll-bar	1

'*Remarks.*

'First time of taking out the hounds — rather wild and did not run together. . . . Found in Margett's grass field, and

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ran a ring with a bad scent. Jumped up in the middle of the pack, and ran a straight line across the Hensington Road and Taylor's Farm, where three of the hounds, getting away quietly (Resolute, Blameless, and Careful), ran into her. Others got wrong. Cheerful not up at the death. Did not find again, but went home at once. Fencer and Blue-cap lame next day. Ground very hard. Scent very bad. — R. H. S. C.'

And so on through many pages of neat, compact handwriting, with which, since these episodes are more diverting in the enterprise than in the chronicle, the reader need not be concerned. The reputation, the popularity, and the fields of the Blenheim Harriers grew steadily. 'I became,' wrote Colonel Thomas, 'very proud of the way in which he hunted his own hounds, as I never knew a more patient persevering Huntsman, with great determination, self-confidence, and quickness in taking any advantage that might occur.' 'Killed altogether last season,' writes Lord Randolph contentfully at the end of February 1868, 'twenty-nine brace of hares and one fox. Season commencing September 8, 1868.'

The harriers required attention in the summer, and the eye of the Master was never long astray. The pack steadily improved in numbers and quality. Some were bred at the Blenheim kennels, others were purchased. One hound he bought from Lord Granville, who sent an amusing letter with him, explaining that he was called 'Radical.' Lord Randolph's correspondence at this time seems to

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have been chiefly concerned with these important matters. Here is a specimen letter:— 1868 ÆT. 19

Lord Randolph Churchill to Mr. Blake, one of his father's tenants.

Gloster Hotel, Cowes, Isle of Wight.

Dear Sir, — You were kind enough in the spring to say that if you could overcome Mrs. Blake's objections you would bring up a puppy for me. I have a very promising litter now by Dexter out of Crazy, that are quite old enough to go out 'to walk,' and should be so very much obliged to you if you would take care of one for me. I have altogether seven couple of puppies, and shall have great difficulty in finding walks for all of them. If you will let Mr. Napier know you will take one, he will send you one, and by doing so you will greatly oblige

Yours faithfully,

RANDOLPH S. CHURCHILL.

Lord Randolph soon became one of the best-known and best-liked figures in the county. He was tactful and considerate to the farmers, whose hospitality he enjoyed, and courteous and composed with his field. Many are the stories of merry lunches at farmhouses, of mournful tumbles into muddy brooks, of jaunts and jollities and every varied chance or mischance of the chase over all that pleasant countryside. Whenever the responsibilities of the harriers permitted and a horse was fresh and fit, he hunted besides with the Heythrop, the Bicester and other neighbouring packs.

But the world did not always smile upon him. It is odd how often persons who in private life, and

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indeed on all other occasions, are the mildest and kindest of men, develop, when engaged in equestrian sport, an unwonted severity and even roughness of manner. Tom Duffield, the Master of the Old Berkshire Hounds, was, like so many good sportsmen, somewhat addicted to the use of firmer language in the hunting-field than the occasion always required. One day, early in the winter of 1868, when Lord Randolph was nearly twenty years old, he had the misfortune to ride too close to the Old Berkshire Hounds and to incur the displeasure of their Master, who rated him in a very violent fashion before the whole company. Lord Randolph was deeply offended. He went home at once; but, as he said nothing at the moment, the incident was for a while forgotten. Towards the end of the season, however, a hunt dinner was held in Oxford, to which Mr. Duffield and many of the Old Berkshire field were bidden, and at which Lord Randolph was called upon to propose the toast of 'Fox-hunting.' He described himself as an enthusiast for all forms of sport. Fox-hunting, he said, in his opinion, ranked first among field sports; but he was himself very fond of hare-hunting too. 'So keen am I that, if I cannot get fox-hunting and cannot get hare-hunting, I like an afternoon with a terrier hunting a rat in a barn; and if I can't get that,' he proceeded, looking round with much deliberation, 'rather than dawdle indoors, I'd go out with Tom Duffield and the Old Berkshire.' There was a minute of general consternation, which the orator complacently surveyed. Then the company,

Lord Randolph & his Father.

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Lord Randolph & his Mother.

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overcome by the audacity of the speaker, burst into laughter, led by Mr. Duffield himself. The story has become a local classic, and, surviving the worthy sportsman against whom it was directed, is still preserved among the farmers from Banbury to Bicester. 1868 ÆT. 19

For three successive seasons (1867–1869), with unimportant intervals occasionally filled by study, Lord Randolph harried the hares of Blenheim and enjoyed himself hugely. His brother, Lord Blandford, to whom he was much attached, was serving in the Blues. His sisters were growing up, and the eldest three were already 'out.' He became the autocrat of the family circle, and, like a wise ruler, took an intense interest in all that concerned his subjects. What balls they had been to, whom they had danced with, and all the similar incidents of a girl's life were the constant objects of his inquiries; and upon all points he expressed his approval or disapproval in the clearest possible terms. Although the Duke might still assert a disciplinary control, there is no doubt that his younger son was from this time forward increasingly petted and beloved by his mother and sisters, to whom in return he showed all the gay and affectionate sides of his nature. 'He was,' wrote his mother, 'the soul of wit and fun and cheerfulness in those happy days.' He made some good friends at Merton — not many in number, but staunch and true. His Eton acquaintance with Lord Dalmeny (afterwards Lord Rosebery) ripened at Oxford into a life-long friendship.

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Dalmeny's rooms in the Canterbury quadrangle of Christ Church were within a stone's-throw of Merton. The two young men were close companions in the adventures and vicissitudes of undergraduate life and Lord Randolph used often to bring his friend over to Blenheim. Here they met on many occasions Mr. Disraeli, and the great Minister, who loved young people, would talk and joke with them by the hour together. He seems to have been delighted with both. His regrets were undisguised when, ten years later, Lord Rosebery threw himself into the tides of the Midlothian campaign. 'I remember,' wrote the Duchess of Marlborough, 'that he first told me (in 1869) that it rested with Randolph to become a distinguished man. From that time he was ever friendly to him, and he watched with interest his early efforts in Parliament, and always wrote to congratulate me when he approved them.'

Besides the harriers, Lord Randolph's greatest amusement at Oxford was chess; and he soon acquired, for an amateur, more than ordinary skill in the game. In conjunction with several friends he founded the University Chess Club; and on the first visit of Mr. Steinitz, the champion chess-player of the world, he conducted one of the boards at the blindfold exhibition. Although his play necessarily lacked the strength derivable from book knowledge and experience, it is described in this, as in other affairs, as being 'original, daring, and sometimes brilliant.' His game with Mr. Steinitz has been

recorded; so that competent persons may judge of his quality for themselves:— 1869 ÆT. 20

Game No. 1 (published in the *Chess Players' Quarterly Chronicle*, vol. ii., p. 110).

ALLGAIER GAMBIT.

White. Mr. Steinitz. (blindfold)	Black. Lord Randolph Churchill.	White. Mr. Steinitz.	Black. Lord Randolph Churchill.
1. P—K 4	P—K 4	18. B × R	Kt × B
2. P—K B 4	P × P	19. R—K sq	P—Q Kt 3 (*d*)
3. Kt—K B 3	P—K Kt 4	20. R × P (ch)	K—Q sq
4. P—K R 4	P—K Kt 5	21. B—Q B 4	B—Q Kt 2
5. Kt—K 5	Q—K 2 (*a*)	22. R—Kt 4	Kt—K Kt 3
6. P—Q 4	P—Q 3	23. P—R 5	Kt—K 2
7. Kt × Kt P	Q × P (ch)	24. R—K sq	Q Kt—Q B 3
8. Q—K 2	P—Q 4	25. P—Q 5	Kt—Q Kt 5 (*e*)
9. Kt—K 5	Kt—K R 3 (*b*)	26. P—Q B 6	B—Q B sq
10. Kt—Q B 3	B—Q Kt 5	27. R—K Kt 7	Kt—Q B 3
11. Q × Q	P × Q	28. P × Kt	Kt × P
12. B × P	Kt—K B 4	29. B—Q Kt 5	B—Q Kt 2
13. Castles	B × Kt	30. R—Q sq (ch)	K—K sq
14. P × B	Kt—Q 3	31. R × Q B P	K—B sq
15. P—Q B 4 (*c*)	P—K B 3	32. R—KB sq (ch)	K—Kt sq
16. P—Q B 5	P × Kt	33. B—Q B 4 (ch), and mates in a few moves.	
17. B × P	Kt—K B 2		

(*a*) This was once a common defence to the Allgaier opening, but it seems to entail the loss of the gambit pawn.

(*b*) B—R 3 would not have done, for White would then have exchanged queens, and played B—Q B 4, &c.

(*c*) This move loses White a piece, but he obtains for it a full equivalent.

(*d*) Black should have lost no time here in getting his pieces out; B—K 3, followed by K—Q 2 seems the best play.

(*e*) Kt—Q R 4 would be, perhaps, better; but in any case he must have the worst of it.

It is not worth while to dwell on college scrapes, though of these some, at any rate, have been recorded. Thus we learn that Lord Randolph Churchill was fined ten shillings for the offence of smoking in his cap and gown; that he broke the windows of the Randolph hotel; that he was taken into custody by the police, with the rest of a noisy supper party, and charged with being drunk; that, infuriated by such an accusation,

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which was not sustained in court, he brought an action for perjury against the police witness; that the college authorities appealed to the Duke of Marlborough to stop the legal proceedings; that the Duke of Marlborough replied that, on the contrary, they had his entire concurrence; that learned counsel were brought by both parties from London; but that in the end the summons was dismissed and the officer exonerated of any wilful intention to deceive. We are also told that one day he was sent for by the Warden to be rebuked for some delinquency. It was winter, and the interview began with the Warden standing before the fireplace and the undergraduate in the middle of the room. By the time the next culprit arrived Lord Randolph was explaining his conduct with his back to the fire and the Warden was a somewhat embarrassed listener in a chilly corner. Such are the tales.

Until he was in his twentieth year Lord Randolph's studies seem to have been fitful. He had, indeed, enjoyed the ordinary education of an English gentleman. He had consumed a vast number of hours at Eton and elsewhere in making those intricate combinations of Latin words and syllables which are perhaps as useful or as harmless a form of mental training as youth can receive. He had — in addition to any acquaintance with classical learning which these exercises may be supposed to impart, and the wide but discursive reading of history and poetry that his tastes had prompted — a peculiar, exact, and intimate knowledge (made

effective by an exceptional memory) of the Bible, Gibbon, and 'Jorrocks.' From these books — not so ill-assorted as they sound — he could recite in an extraordinary manner whole pages at a time. In the strong, simple, homely words and phrases, sonorous sentences, and veins of rough spontaneous mirth which characterise the style and language of his rhetoric and writings, the influence of these three varied fountains, quaintly, yet not incongruously, intermingled, can be plainly seen. 1869 ÆT. 20

Although it is much better for the brain, and for the practical purposes of life, to know and understand one book than to have read a hundred, such an educational outfit was no title to academic distinction; and after he had been three years at Merton Lord Randolph determined to work seriously for an honours degree in history and law. He forthwith proceeded to put away his 'toys,' as he called them; and the Blenheim Harriers were given up without delay. The county gentlemen and farmers who had followed their fortunes with pleasure, if not with profit, determined to mark their appreciation of the pack and its youthful Master by the customary British ceremony of a dinner. A banquet was accordingly held at the Bear hotel in Woodstock at which Lord Randolph was hospitably entertained and generally praised. He replied to the toast of his health simply and briefly, as one speaking in his own place to his friends and neighbours.

'Now that the harriers are gone,' he said, 'the future seems rather a blank. Perchance, in the

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course of time and events, I may find myself separated from these scenes of my youth. But you may rest assured that my Oxfordshire home and my Oxfordshire friends will ever be present and dear to my mind; and that, in whatever quarter of the world I may find myself, among whatever people, or pursuing whatever occupation, you, gentlemen, who have asked me here to dinner this evening, the happy hours I have spent among you, the fields and pastures of our well-known and favourite hunting grounds, and, last but not least, the old pack of harriers, will remain amongst those pleasant and gratifying recollections of days that are gone by, upon which I shall at all times delight to dwell.'

After this he began to work in earnest. The time which intervened before the December examinations was all too short to repair the well-spent idleness of previous years. It was fortunate that in these busy months he came under the influence of that good and eminent man Dr. Creighton, who took the greatest interest in him and aided and encouraged his exertions by every means. 'He was always amenable to expostulation, when wisely administered,' wrote Bishop Creighton in a letter to Mr. Escott in 1895, 'and consulted me with freedom on all matters relating to the daily conduct of his life. At first he did not read much, having a habit of going to sleep in his chair after dinner, often for hours, which he only gradually overcame. But from the first I was interested to see his growing appreciation of the value

of history, especially on its legal and constitutional side. He would take up a subject and talk about it till he had reached its bottom. As his interest grew he read more. . . .' 1869 ÆT. 20

The Bishop proceeds to relate an incident which seems to have impressed him. 'My attention was called to his marked ability for practical politics early in his career. Soon after he came to Merton he deemed it his duty to write a letter in defence of his father, who had been attacked on some question of Woodstock politics. Before sending the note he brought it to me. I was greatly impressed by its dignity and its dexterity — the former as the composition of a son about his father, the latter in the administration of a reproof without leaving a loophole of escape.' Dr. Creighton advised him not to enter into political controversy at his time of life. Lord Randolph's answer was: 'I have thought it over, and decided that point for myself. What I came to ask you was if you saw anything in the letter which you thought unbecoming.' On this Dr. Creighton admitted, 'If you are going to send a letter at all, you could not send a better one.'

'That incident gave me,' writes the Bishop, 'a real insight into Churchill's character, and showed me his capacity for practical politics. He made up his own mind; having well reflected, he chose his ground of attack, and then took every pains about the form of expression. He sought no advice about what he was going to do, but was anxious to do it "as well as possible."'

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Dr. Creighton to the Duchess of Marlborough.

November 14, 1870.

I only wish that greater numbers took the same interest that you and the Duke do in your son's proceedings at Oxford, and then its results might be greater than they are.

As regards Lord Randolph, I still think that he is wise in going in for examination now rather than in the summer. It is, of course, always difficult to predict the result of an examination; but I think that it would be very improbable, so far as my experience goes, that he should get any lower class than a second: some of his subjects he knows remarkably well — quite up to the standard of a first class — others he is not so much interested in. At present he is quite in earnest with his work, and has vigour and freshness in his treatment of it. He might no doubt, and probably would, be better prepared in six weeks' time; but the interval of six months would be too long, and would give him temptations to listlessness and idleness which might leave him in a worse position at the end of that time than he is now.

I shall, however, require from him a rigorous account of what he does in examination; and if I think he has not done himself justice, I shall advise him to remove his name before the end, and so put off his examination to the summer. Do not, however, suggest this to him as a possibility. It is bad for anyone to have an alternative before him, and it were better that I judged after the event than that he thought of it during the process. At present I certainly think he will get a second class at least.

Lord Randolph himself was hopeful: —

Lord Randolph to his Mother.

Merton College: Tuesday.

I hope you won't hope for too much when I tell you that yesterday and to-day I have been doing much better in my examination, which has been chiefly about what I have been reading this term; so I have been able to do it. I am very

much afraid Saturday's work will go against me. A great deal depends on how I do to-morrow morning, which is the last day. There is no more writing work; it is what they call *viva voce* and that is the hardest. I hope that I will have a little luck and be asked what I know best and then perhaps it will come right, but even if it does the whole thing has been a dreadful scramble and I see now, too late, that I had much better have waited until June. However, I saw Creighton yesterday, and he was all against my scratching, and thinks I shall get through all right. I shall know by three or four o'clock to-morrow and shall telegraph. I am not very sanguine, but shall be dreadfully disappointed. 1870 Æt. 21

I shall not be able to come home until Saturday or Monday anyhow, as I must keep my term. Poor little Wasp died yesterday. I am very much distressed, for she was so nice and was the first dog I had you did not object to. I do not think I shall get another, they all seem to die.

Gladstone is safe to be beaten they say to-day. The Conservatives are beginning to pick up a little now, but we shall be in a shocking minority. I think Papa will be glad to get out of it though, and that is the only thing that consoles me. The papers seem to be in a dreadful fright for fear the Queen should send for Lord Granville. How spiteful they are!

Dr. Creighton's forecast was, however, justified by the result: —

Dr. Creighton to the Duchess of Marlborough,

December 15.

I must own I was sorry when I heard how narrowly Lord Randolph missed the first class: a few more questions answered, and a few omissions in some of his papers, and he would have secured it. He was, I am told by the examiners, the best man who was put in the second class; and the great hardship is, as your Grace observes, that he should be in the

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same class with so many who are very greatly his inferior in knowledge and ability.

It is rather tantalising to think he came so near; if he had been further off I should have been more content. Still I am glad he went in for examination this time. I think he would only have idled the six months before the next examination.

On the whole I think he has learned a good deal during his time at Oxford, and I do not think he regrets his residence here. I am sorry to lose him.

After leaving Oxford Lord Randolph made (1870) another and much longer tour in Europe. He liked few things better than to prowl about at his leisure from one new place to another, seeing all the sights, the galleries, the monuments, the circuses, and above all the zoological gardens, with eyes that never lost their interest even for the smallest trifles. Through France, Italy, and Austria he rambled light-heartedly; and when, after an absence of nearly a year, he came back to Blenheim he had enlarged his fancy and extended his education in various directions beyond the limits of a University curriculum. Behold him now at twenty-three, a man grown, markedly reserved in his manner to acquaintances, utterly unguarded to his intimate friends, something of a dandy in his dress, an earnest sportsman, an omnivorous reader, moving with a jaunty step through what were in those days the very select circles of fashion and club-land, seeking the pleasures of the Turf and town. This interlude was soon ended.

In August of 1873 Lord Randolph went to Cowes upon what proved to him a memorable visit. In honour of the arrival of the Czarewitch and the

Czarevna the officers of the cruiser *Ariadne,* then lying as guard-ship in the Roads, gave a ball, to which all the pleasure-seekers who frequent the Solent at this season of the year made haste to go in boats and launches from the shore and from the pleasure fleet. Here for the first time he met Miss Jerome, an American girl whose singular beauty and gifted vivacity had excited general attention. He was presented to her by a common friend. Waltzing made him giddy, and he detested dancing of all kinds; so that after a formal quadrille they sat and talked. She was living with her mother and eldest sister at Rosetta Cottage, a small house which they had taken for the summer, with a tiny garden facing the sea. Thither the next night, duly bidden, he repaired to dine. The dinner was good, the company gay and attractive, and with the two young ladies chatting and playing duets at the piano the evening passed very pleasantly. She was nineteen, and he scarcely twenty-four; and, if Montaigne is to be believed, this period of extreme youth is Love's golden moment. That very night Miss Jerome told her laughing and incredulous sister of a presentiment that their new friend was the man she would marry; and Lord Randolph confided to Colonel Edgecumbe, who was of the party, that he admired the two sisters and meant, if he could, to make 'the dark one' his wife. 1873 ÆT. 24

Next day they met again 'by accident' — so runs the account I have received — and went for a walk. That evening he was once more a guest at Rosetta Cottage. That night — the third of their acquaintance

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— was a beautiful night, warm and still, with the lights of the yachts shining on the water and the sky bright with stars. After dinner they found themselves alone together in the garden, and — brief courtship notwithstanding — he proposed and was accepted.

So far as the principals were concerned, everything was thus easily and swiftly settled, and the matter having become so earnest all further meetings were suspended until the Duke of Marlborough and Mr. Jerome, who was in America, had been consulted. Lord Randolph returned to Blenheim shaken by alternating emotions of joy and despondency. He had never been in love before and the force and volume of the tide swept him altogether off his feet. At one moment he could scarcely believe that one so unworthy as he could have been preferred; the next he trembled lest all his hopes should be shattered by circumstances unforeseen. Nor indeed was his anxiety without reason; for many and serious obstacles had yet to be encountered and smoothed away. From Blenheim he wrote to his father.

To his Father.

Blenheim: Wednesday, August 20, 1873.

I must not any longer keep you in ignorance of a very important step I have taken — one which will undoubtedly influence very strongly all my future life.

I met, soon after my arrival at Cowes, a Miss Jeannette Jerome, the daughter of an American lady who has lived for some years in Paris and whose husband lives in New York. I passed most of my time at Cowes in her (Jeannette's) society, and before leaving asked her if she loved me well enough to

marry me; and she told me she did. I do not think that if I were to write pages I could give you any idea of the strength of my feelings and affection and love for her; all I can say is that I love her better than life itself, and that my one hope and dream now is that matters may be so arranged that soon I may be united to her by ties that nothing but death itself could have the power to sever. 1873 ÆT. 24

I know, of course, that you will be very much surprised, and find it difficult to understand how an attachment so strong could have arisen in so short a space of time; and really I feel it quite impossible for me to give any explanation of it that could appear reasonable to anyone practical and dispassionate. I must, however, ask you to believe it as you could the truest and most real statement that could possibly be made to you, and to believe also that upon a subject so important, and I may say so solemn, I could not write one word that was in the smallest degree exaggerated, or that might not be taken at its fullest meaning.

I hope you won't feel any annoyance with me for not having consulted you before saying anything to her. I really meant to have done so; but on the night before I was leaving Cowes (Friday) my feelings of sorrow at parting from her were more than I could restrain, and I told her all. I did not say anything to her mother, but I believe that she did after I was gone; for she wrote to me just as I was starting (I did not, after all, leave Cowes till the Monday), and she said in her letter that her mother could not hear of it. That I am at a loss to understand.

I told Mama when I got here and should have written at once to tell you; but I was so wretched and miserable at leaving thus, I was quite incapable of writing quietly.

I now write to tell you of it all, and to ask you whether you will be able to increase my allowance to some extent to put me in the position to ask Mrs. Jerome to let me become her daughter's future husband. I enclose you her photograph, and will only say about her that she is as nice, as lovable, and amiable and charming in every way as she is beautiful, and

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that by her education and bringing-up she is in every way qualified to fill any position.

She has an elder sister, and one younger, who is not yet out. Mr. Jerome is a gentleman who is obliged to live in New York to look after his business. I do not know what it is. He is reputed to be very well off, and his daughters, I believe, have very good fortunes, but I do not know any thing for certain. He generally comes over for three or four months every year. Mrs. Jerome has lived in Paris for several years and has educated her daughters there. They go out in Society there and are very well known.

I have told you all I know about them at present. You have always been very good to me, and done as much and more for me always than I had any right to expect; and with any arrangement that you may at any time make for me I shall be perfectly contented and happy. I see before me now a very happy future, almost in one's grasp. In the last year or so I feel I have lost a great deal of what energy and ambition I possessed, and an idle and comparatively useless life has at times appeared to me to be the pleasantest; but if I were married to her whom I have told you about, if I had a companion, such as she would be, I feel sure, to take an interest in one's prospects and career, and to encourage me to exertions and to doing something towards making a name for myself, I think that I might become, with the help of Providence, all and perhaps more than you had ever wished and hoped for me. On the other hand, if anything should occur to prevent my fondest hopes and wishes being realised (a possibility which I dare not and cannot bring myself to think of), how dreary and uninteresting would life become to me! No one goes through what I have lately gone through without its leaving a strong impress and bias on their character and future. Time might, of course, partially efface the impression and recollection of feelings so strong as those I have tried to describe to you, but in the interval the best years of one's life would be going, and one's energies and hopes would become blunted and deadened.

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I will not allude to her. I believe and am convinced that she loves me as fully, and as strongly if possible, as I do her; and when two people feel towards each other what we do, it becomes, I know, a great responsibility for anyone to assist in either bringing about or thwarting a union so closely desired by each.

Good-bye. I have written to you all I have done, all I feel, and all I know.

Anxiously wishing for an answer from you,
I remain
Ever your most affectionate son,
RANDOLPH.

The Duke was very seriously disturbed at the news of his son's intention and declined to commit himself to any expression of approval until he had made searching inquiry into the standing and circumstances of the Jerome family. He deplored the precipitancy with which the decision had been taken. 'It is not likely,' he wrote upon August 31, 'that at present you can look at anything except from your own point of view; but persons from the outside cannot but be struck with the unwisdom of your proceedings, and the uncontrolled state of your feelings, which completely paralyses your judgment.' His rebuke was supported by his wife, who urged affectionate counsels of caution, patience, and self-restraint, and was pointed by a set of witty and satirical verses from his brother, Lord Blandford, setting forth the unhappy fate of those who marry in haste and repent at leisure.

It will easily be understood how this attitude — most Americans being proud as the devil — raised corresponding objections on the other side. Mr. Jerome

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was himself in many ways a remarkable personality. He had made and lost and made again considerable fortunes in the enterprise and struggle of American life. He had founded the first two great American racecourses, Jerome Park and Coney Island Jockey Club, and divides with Mr. August Belmont the claim to be the father of the American Turf. He owned and edited the *New York Times*. A vehement Federalist in the Civil War, he was said to have subscribed nearly half his fortune to the Federal war funds. When in 1862 the war party in New York was discredited by the disasters of the campaign, and riotous mobs attacked the *Times* office, Mr. Jerome — having purchased a battery of cannon and armed his staff with rifles — beat them off, not without bloodshed. Altogether he was a man of force and versatility. He had at first, indeed, written a conditional assent to his daughter's engagement, but he withdrew it with promptness as soon as he heard a murmur of opposition. Mrs. Jerome and her daughters retreated to France; and all interviews, and even communications, were forbidden by all the parents. Randolph Churchill, however, knew his own mind in many things, and most especially in this. Such was his vehemence that the Duke was soon persuaded, for the sake of his son's peace of mind and of his own authority, to acquiesce — at any rate, provisionally — in a formal engagement. But he insisted upon delay. Nothing, he declared, but time could prove an affection so rapidly excited; and with this decision, supported

and emphasised by the Jeromes, the lovers had perforce to be content. 1873 Æt. 24

The control of parents over grown-up children was in those unregenerate days much more severe than now. Letters were indeed allowed to pass freely between the lovers; but visits were grudged and restricted. Only at intervals of a month, or even six weeks, were they permitted to see each other, and in these circumstances it may be imagined that both pens were busy. In this field the young lady had a great advantage. The placid succession of the duties and amusements of country life — the round of shooting parties, the varying totals of slaughtered hares and pheasants, the mornings on the Woodstock bench, and descriptions of relations and county folk — however vivacious, were inadequate materials to set against days spent in Paris during the autumn of 1873, when the gossip of the world was reviving after the gag of the war, when Bazaine was upon his trial for his life, when Gambetta declaimed in the Assembly, and when the drawing-rooms, even of foreigners, were full of Royalist and Bonapartist whisperings. For the most part his letters were strictly confined to the subject of main importance. They told over and over again, in the forcible, homely English of which he was a natural master, the oldest story in the world. Indeed, but for the contributions of Miss Jerome the correspondence would certainly have lacked variety.

Towards the end of September the Duke committed himself with preciseness to the opinion that one year's delay was necessary. To this Lord Randolph

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was far from agreeing and he conceived himself possessed of a lever which might be used to shorten considerably this weary period of waiting.

To Miss Jerome.

Blenheim: Tuesday, September 23.

I cannot tell you what pleasure and happiness your letter gives me; it makes me feel quite a different being, so you really must not threaten me with a long silence. You certainly have great powers of perception, and I cannot but own that there is a good deal of truth in what you say about my being one moment very despairing and another moment very sanguine. I cannot help it; I was made so.

My father has been away for a few days, and yesterday I got a 'piece' from him on the subject of his consent. After a good deal of unnecessary rigmarole and verbosity he says:

'The great question is still unsolved, whether you and the young lady who has gained your affections are, or can be, after a few days' acquaintance, sufficiently aware of your own minds to venture on the step which is to bind you together for life. What I have now to say is that if I am to believe that your future is really bound up in your marriage with Miss Jerome you must show me the proof of it by bringing it to the test of time. I will say no more to you on this subject for the present, but if this time next year you come and tell me that you are both of the same mind we will receive Miss Jerome as a daughter, and, I need not say, in the affection you could desire for your wife.'

Now these are his words, but I do not mind telling you that it is all humbug about waiting a year. I could, and would, wait a good deal more than a year, but I do not mean to, as it is not the least necessary; for though we have only known each other a short time, I know we both know our own minds well enough, and I wrote a very long and diplomatic letter to my father yesterday, doing what I have never done before, contradicting him and arguing with him and, I hope, persuading him that he has got very wrong

and foolish ideas in his head. You see, both he and my mother have set their hearts on my being member for Woodstock. It is a family borough, and for years and years a member of the family has sat for it. The present member is a stranger, though a Conservative, and is so unpopular that he is almost sure to be beaten if he were to stand; and the fact of a Radical sitting for Woodstock is perfectly insupportable to my family. It is for this that they have kept me idle ever since I left Oxford, waiting for a dissolution. Well, as I told you the other day, a dissolution is sure to come almost before the end of the year. I have two courses open to me: either to refuse to stand altogether unless they consent to my being married immediately afterwards; or else — and this is still more Machiavellian and deep — to stand, but at the last moment to threaten to withdraw and leave the Radical to walk over. All tricks are fair in love and war.

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These desperate expedients were not, however, necessary. The parents on both sides only wished to be assured that the attachment of their children was no passing caprice, but a sincere and profound affection; and as the weeks grew into months this conviction was irresistibly borne in upon them. In October the Duke was willing to admit that the period of probation might be considerably curtailed. But he still had strong reasons for not wishing the marriage to take place immediately. The dissolution was certainly in the air. By-election after by-election had gone against Mr. Gladstone's Government. Greenwich, Stroud, Dover, Hull, Exeter, East Staffordshire, and Renfrewshire had renounced their allegiance; Bath had been barely retained, and the Solicitor-General, whose victory at Taunton had been

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a much-paraded compensation, was threatened with a petition for bribery. It was most important that Woodstock should be held for the Conservatives. No one could possibly have so good a chance as the young cadet born and bred on the soil, who knew half the farmers and local magnates personally, whose excursions with the harriers had made him familiar with all parts of the constituency, and whose gay and stormy attractiveness had won him a host of sworn allies.

Yet he had often in words and in letters expressed a disinclination for public life. It is curious to notice how even in the days of buoyant unconquered youth, moods of depression cast their shadows across his path. Although possessed of unusual nervous energy, his whole life was a struggle against ill-health. Excitement fretted him cruelly. He smoked cigarettes 'till his tongue was sore' to soothe himself. Capable upon emergency of prolonged and vehement exertion, of manifold activities and pugnacities, of leaps and heaves beyond the common strength of men, he suffered by reaction fits of utter exhaustion and despondency. Most people grow tired before they are over-tired. But Lord Randolph Churchill was of the temper that gallops till it falls. An instinct warned him of the perils which threatened him in a life of effort. He shrank from it in apprehension. Peace and quiet, sport and friends, agricultural interests — above all a home — offered a woodland path far more alluring than the dusty road to London. The Duke felt, and with reason, that

unless Lord Randolph were member for Woodstock before his marriage, not only would the borough be seduced to Radicalism, but that the son in whom all the hopes and ambitions of his later life were centred might never enter Parliament at all. 1873 Æt. 24

Lord Randolph was very grateful for the friendly attitude his family had now assumed and was quite prepared to repay concession by patience in one direction and by energy in another:—

To his Father.

Blenheim: Thursday, October (?), 1873.

I write by an early post to acknowledge your letter and to thank you very much for it. It is indeed a most kind letter and I am most grateful to you, as it is all I could have expected. Mama tells me that you got up early in the morning to write it, and indeed I thank you very much indeed for writing to me as you have done, and I only hope you did not tire yourself very much before your long journey.

I go to London to-day and to Paris to-morrow. I enclose you a letter from Hawkins about the registration, which seems to be satisfactory. I am sure you need not fear my doing my very best to get in, and therefore to be some credit to you. I feel that in this you have acted very kindly to me and I feel very grateful to you, although I know there are circumstances now which would have led some people to very different conclusions. I am, however, perfectly confident that ultimately you will never regret for a moment having acted as you have done.

To Miss Jerome.

Blenheim: Monday, October (?), 1873.

I was so happy to see your handwriting again; it is next best thing to seeing you. As you will have seen from my letter of Friday, we have no cause now to be disappointed

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or to be in bad spirits; everything goes on as favourably as we could expect, and my father does not wish, for a moment, to prevent my seeing you as often as I can, and has promised to give his consent to our marriage when he is sure we are fond of each other. As to the year, I have every right to say that I do not think they will insist on it. . . .

The clouds have all cleared away, and the sky is bluer than I have ever seen it since I first met you at Cowes. It is exactly six weeks to-morrow since we met on board the *Ariadne*, and I am sure I seem to have lived six years. How I do bless that day, in spite of all the worry and bother that has come since; and I am sure you will not regret it. I have not had a further conversation with my father since I wrote to you, for I think it is best to leave things for the present as they are. Our early golden dreams of being married in December won't quite become realised, but still it won't be very long to wait; and I shall be able to see you from time to time, and write as often as I like; in fact, we can be regularly engaged, and all the world may know it. . . .

It is curious what an effect books have on me; I have two old favourites. When I feel very cross and angry I read Gibbon, whose profound philosophy and easy though majestic writing soon quiets me down, and in an hour I feel at peace with all the world. When I feel very low and desponding I read Horace, whose thorough epicureanism, quiet maxims, and beautiful verse are most tranquillising. Of late I have had to have frequent recourse to my two friends, and they have never failed me. I strongly recommend you to read some great works or histories; they pass the time, and prevent you from worrying or thinking too much about the future. Novels, or even travels, are rather unsatisfactory, and do one no good, because they create an unhealthy excitement, which is bad for anyone. I wonder whether you will understand all this, or only think me rather odd.

There are three new elections to come off, owing to death vacancies; and if they go against the Government, as they very probably will, we are sure to have a dissolution, and

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then I shall become member for Woodstock. But, after all, public life has no great charms for me, as I am naturally very quiet, and hate bother and publicity, which, after all, is full of vanity and vexation of spirit. Still, it will all have greater attractions for me if I think it will please you and that you take an interest in it and will encourage me to keep up to the mark.

I hope your sister is quite well, comforts you, and sticks up for me when you abuse me to her or doubt me.

A fortnight later he insisted that he should be allowed to visit the Jeromes in the middle of December; and this having been agreed to, the process of counting the days began. But upon the eve of departure an unexpected misfortune intervened. His aunt Lady Portarlington was taken dangerously ill. The family were hurriedly summoned to Emo, and the delightful anticipations of a fortnight in Paris under such circumstances were exchanged for the melancholy reality of nearly a month in Ireland, watching in daily uncertainty a painful and unavailing struggle with death. It is easy to imagine the vexation of such delay and the longings which possessed him to leave the house of mourning. But the family leant on him and, while his presence was of real use and value, he felt bound to wait wearily on from day to day. The course of the illness was varied: once recovery seemed almost certain; but after many relapses the end came in the middle of January. Immediately after the funeral — which was celebrated with much Catholic pomp — Lord Randolph tore himself away, crossed the Irish Channel the same night,

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and was about to proceed the next evening to France, when another even more imperative call arrested him. Parliament was dissolved.

This event, long looked for, often rumoured, had come at last with the suddenness of surprise. But Woodstock was not unprepared. The Duke of Marlborough had waited impatiently for the first General Election after his brother's lapse to regain his control over the representation of his borough. When Parliament had been dissolved in July 1865, Lord Alfred Churchill, according to his agreement, did not open his candidature; and Mr. Henry Barnett, the Squire of Glympton Park, a well-known London banker, was put forward as the Conservative candidate and (let it not be overlooked) ducal nominee. A Liberal was found in Mr. Mitchell Henry, afterwards better known as the Home Rule member for Galway; but the Squire carried the election by 24 votes, and, having been again successful in 1868, was the sitting member at the time when another cadet of the great house had ripened to a Parliamentary age.

Mr. Barnett now, as it turned out, very conveniently, expressed an earnest wish to relinquish the toils and responsibilities of public life; and the ancient borough, with an imperturbable solemnity and a conservative reverence for the form in which things should be done, was prompt in sending a regular requisition for Lord Randolph's services. The electors, according to this document, declared that no one could better champion their cause at this crisis, or more fitly represent their views in

the ensuing Parliament. They urged him to stand; and in view of the fact that there happened to be that very afternoon a coursing meeting in the Park which all the local farmers were expected to attend, he had to set off for Blenheim without delay. 1874 Æt. 25

The series of letters to Paris was sadly broken into by the contest, and for the most part only telegrams had to fill the gap: but here and there a moment could be snatched.

To Miss Jerome.

Blenheim: Monday.

It was perfectly impossible for me to get any letter off by last night's post, as I have not had a moment to spare. Since ten this morning I went and saw several people at Woodstock, and had, on the whole, satisfactory answers and assurances of support. It was a most fortunate circumstance that the Annual Coursing Meeting, which my father allows every year in the Park, had been fixed for to-day; all the farmers were there, and as they had a good day's sport were all in great spirits. I took the chair at their dinner at the Bear hotel, and you cannot imagine how enthusiastic they were for me. They all go as one man. I hear nothing certain as to any opposition; there are no end of rumours, but no one as yet has appeared publicly; I suppose we shall know for certain to-morrow.

I am now off to a part of the borough four miles distant, to see more people, and I have a large meeting of my committee at four in Woodstock. I think I may say that for the present everything is satisfactory. There are 1,071 voters, and I do not think more than 800 will poll; out of these I calculate at least on 460, which will be enough. But this is, of course, mere guess-work; it is all still very uncertain, and I am glad I lost no time in arriving.

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Blenheim: Tuesday.

The Radical candidate, Mr. Brodrick, arrived this morning; I made his acquaintance, and we shook hands and were very friendly. The contest will be a hard one and the result doubtful; it is impossible to say how the labourers will go. However, I have made a very good start, and have nothing to complain of as yet.

Blenheim: Saturday.

I am sure it is not necessary for me to excuse myself for not writing to you; you would not believe what work it is. We had a great meeting last night, which was very successful; we had a good speaker down from London, and I made a speech. How I have been longing for you to have been with me! If we had only been married before this! I think the reception you would have got, would have astonished you. The number of houses I have been into — many of them dirty cottages — the number of unwashed hands I have cordially shaken, you would not believe. My head is in a whirl of voters, committee meetings, and goodness knows what. I am glad it is drawing to an end, as I could not stand it very long; I cannot eat or sleep.

I am now off again, 10 A.M., to see more people.

Blenheim: Sunday.

At last I have a pretty quiet day; but I have been very busy this afternoon, and, in spite of its being Sunday, I have been active among several little odd fellows whom it is important to pick up. How this election is going I really can form no opinion, and the excitement and uncertainty of it make me quite ill. Yesterday I was canvassing all day in Woodstock itself. People that I think know better than anybody, tell me it will be very close. You see, with the ballot one can tell nothing — one can only trust to promises, and I have no doubt a good many will be broken. Our organisation and preparations for Tuesday are very perfect, and the old borough has never been worked in such a way

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before. You have no idea how this election gets hold of me. One can positively think of nothing else except voters and committees, &c., till one's brain gets quite addled and in a whirl. I have a presentiment that it will go wrong. I am such a fool to care so much about it. I hate all this excitement. . . . I saw my opponent to-day in church. He looks awfully harassed. I feel quite sorry for him, as all his friends here are such a dreadfully disreputable lot; and as I have got the three principal hotels in the town, he has nothing except a wretched, low, miserable pot-house to stay in.

Unfortunate Mr. Brodrick! The result of the election in no way belied the quality of his accommodation.

Ever since I met you everything goes well with me — too well; I am getting afraid of a Nemesis. I always hoped I should win the election, but that under the ballot and against a man like Brodrick I should have that crushing, overwhelming majority [of 165 out of 973 voters] never entered into my wildest dreams. It was a great victory — we shall never have a contest again. The last two contests — '65 and '68 — were won only by 17 and 21 majorities; so just conceive the blow it is to the other side. You never heard such cheering in all your life. The poll was not declared till eleven, and the hours of suspense were most trying; but when it was known, there was such a burst of cheers that must have made the old Dukes in the vault jump. I addressed a few words to the committee — and so did Blandford — and was immensely cheered; and then they accompanied us, the whole crowd of them, through the town and up to Blenheim, shouting and cheering all the way. Oh, it was a great triumph — and that you were not there to witness it will always be a source of great regret to me. . . .

There is nothing more to be done except to pay the bill, and that I have left to my father.

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The Woodstock election being out of the way, the road was cleared for more important matters. The Duke, his political anxieties laid to rest, journeyed to Paris, saw the young lady for himself, and, returning completely converted, withdrew all remaining stipulations for delay. But further difficulties presented themselves. The question of settlements proved delicate and thorny. Mr. Jerome had strong and, it would seem, not unreasonable views, suggested by American usage, about married women's property and made some propositions which Lord Randolph considered derogatory to him. Although he was to benefit considerably under the arrangement proposed, he refused utterly to agree to any settlement which contained even technical provisions to which he objected; and after an embarrassing discussion went off to prepare determined plans to earn a living 'in England or out of it,' as fortune should dictate, for himself and his future wife — 'a course in which,' so he wrote to his father, 'I am bound to say she thoroughly agrees with me.'

Face to face with this ultimatum — the first of any importance and not the least successful in Lord Randolph's forceful career — Mr. Jerome, who after all only wished to make a proper and prudent arrangement, capitulated after twenty-four hours' consideration. A satisfactory treaty was ratified, and it only remained to fulfil the conditions. The negotiations had already extended over seven months and the ceremony was appointed without further delay. The Duke, though unable to be present himself, sent his blessing in a

most cordial letter. 'Although, my dear Randolph, you have acted in this business with less than usual deliberation, you have adhered to your choice with unwavering constancy and I cannot doubt the truth and force of your affection.' On April 15, 1874, the marriage was celebrated at the British Embassy in Paris, and after a tour — not too prolonged — upon the Continent, Lord Randolph Churchill returned in triumph with his bride to receive the dutiful laudations of the borough of Woodstock and enjoy the leafy glories of Blenheim in the spring.

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CHAPTER II

MEMBER FOR WOODSTOCK

> Minutely trace man's life; year after year,
> Through all his days let all his deeds appear,
> And then, though some may in that life be strange,
> Yet there appears no vast nor sudden change;
> The links that bind those various deeds are seen,
> And no mysterious void is left between.
>
> CRABBE, *The Parting Hour.*

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A PROFOUND tranquillity brooded over the early years of the Parliament of 1874. Mr. Gladstone was in retirement. A young Irishman, Charles Stewart Parnell, had been beaten at the General Election in his Dublin candidature and did not enter the House of Commons or make a nervous maiden speech till the spring of 1875. Mr. Chamberlain, a new though already formidable English politician, had, as a Radical, vainly attacked Mr. Roebuck, the Liberal member for Sheffield, and was not returned as a representative of Birmingham till 1876. The Irish party was led sedately along the uncongenial paths of constitutional agitation by Mr. Butt; Radicalism was without a spokesman; and the Liberals reposed under the leadership of Lord Hartington and the ascendency of the Whigs. For the first time since the schism of 1846 a Conservative

Administration was founded upon a Conservative majority. The fiscal period had closed. All those questions of trade and navigation, of the incidence of taxation and of public economy, which had occupied almost the whole lives of political leaders on both sides, were settled. New strains, new problems, new perils approached — but at a distance; and in the meanwhile the Conservative party, relieved from the necessity of defending untenable positions, freed from controversies which had proved to them so utterly disastrous, received again the confidence of the nation and the substantial gift of power. 1874 ÆT. 25

The reasons which had induced, or perhaps compelled Mr. Disraeli to refuse to form a Government on the defeat of Mr. Gladstone's Irish University Bill early in 1873, seemed conclusive at the time. They were certainly vindicated by the subsequent course of events. The Liberal Ministry never recovered its credit. Nonconformist wrath at the Education Act and Radical disdain continued fierce and enduring. Harsh demands for social reforms began to come from Birmingham and grated on the ears of the Whigs. The dissensions in the governing party cast their shadows upon the Cabinet. Vexatious quarrels broke out among Ministers. No reconstruction availed. Not even the return of Mr. Bright to the Administration could revive its falling fortunes: by-elections were adverse and the House of Commons was apathetic. The Government of 1868 had been in its day very powerful. Scarcely any Prime Minister had enjoyed the support of such distinguished col-

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leagues as Mr. Gladstone had commanded in the noonday of his strength. Few Administrations had more punctually and faithfully discharged the pledges under which they had assumed office. The statute-book, the Army, and the finances bore forcible testimony to their reforming zeal. But their usefulness and their welcome were alike exhausted and the nation listened with morose approval to the charges which Mr. Disraeli preferred. 'For nearly five years,' he wrote to Lord Grey de Wilton, October 3, 1873, on the eve of the by-election at Bath, 'the present Ministers have harassed every trade, worried every profession, and assailed or menaced every class, institution, and species of property in the country. Occasionally they have varied this state of civil warfare by perpetrating some job which outraged public opinion, or by stumbling into mistakes which have been always discreditable and sometimes ruinous.'

Yet it is alleged that a cause much more personal than political precipitated the dissolution. Mr. Gladstone had at the late reconstruction become Chancellor of the Exchequer as well as First Lord of the Treasury. Had he therefore vacated his seat by accepting an office of profit under the Crown? The Opposition was alert; the law officers were as doubtful in their published opinion as the constituency of Greenwich in its temper. The question lay outside the control of the Government and their supporters. If Mr. Gladstone sat and voted when the session opened, he could be sued in the courts for substantial penalties;

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and none could forecast the decision. On the other hand, the defeat of the Prime Minister, as the culmination of a long series of ill-fated by-elections, would be at once a personal humiliation and a political disaster. It must therefore be reckoned almost a fortunate coincidence that the Estimates both of the Admiralty and the War Office to some degree exceeded the limits within which Mr. Gladstone had hoped to confine them and that the Ministers responsible for those departments should have been reluctant to reduce them. Who shall pronounce upon the motives of men — in what obscure and varying relations they combine or conflict, in what proportion they are mingled? Something of the vanity of a great man irritated by a personal difficulty, something of the weariness that waits on generous effort not acknowledged, something of physical revolt from the interminable wrangles and compromises of a Cabinet, much consideration, let it be said, for the proud dignity of which the British Government should never be divested, induced Mr. Gladstone in the first days of 1874 to advise the dissolution of Parliament.

The Conservatives reaped the advantage of their leader's self-restraint. A year before they had rejected office. They now appealed for power. Instead of coming hat in hand, a defeated, discredited, and degraded Ministry who had held their places for a few months in order to wind up a session at the contemptuous toleration of a hostile majority, they presented themselves with authority and reserve to the good opinion of the public. The result was decisive.

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In vain Mr. Gladstone promised the abolition of the income-tax, the diminution of local taxation, and the reduction of burdens upon articles of general consumption. In vain the financial and administrative triumphs of Liberalism were paraded. The elections resulted in a Tory majority of fifty — 'really,' according to Mr. Gladstone, 'of much greater strength'; and that strange prophet of Israel who for thirty years had wandered in the wilderness of fiscal heresy, led his astonished or doubtful followers back to the land of place and promise.

Liberal recriminations occupied the morrow of disaster. Mr. Gladstone was blamed for an impulsive and precipitate dissolution. Mr. Chamberlain described his address and its financial allurements as 'the meanest public document that had ever, in like circumstances, proceeded from the pen of a statesman of the first rank.'[1] Other critics asserted that all would have been well had he waited till after the Budget with its noble surplus, or till the genial weather of the summer-time, or till some period still more remote. Under all ran a current of satire and suggestion about the double office, the Greenwich election, and their influence upon greater decisions. Mr. Gladstone for his part was not backward in rejoinder. 'Not from anger, but because it is absolutely necessary to party action to learn that all the duties and responsibilities do not rest on the leaders, but that followers have their obligations too,' he

[1] *Fortnightly Review*, October, 1874, vol. xvi., p. 412.

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announced his retirement from the Liberal leadership and his determination to secure some interval of private life 'between Parliament and the grave.' From this intention not the consternation of his party, nor the appeals of his friends, nor the taunts of his detractors could move him further than to promise a limited and occasional leadership, which in the course of a session was found to mean no leadership at all.

Notwithstanding the risk of being forced to form a future Administration, several eminent men stepped forward to the gap; but the issue quickly narrowed itself to a contest between Mr. Forster and Lord Hartington. Mr. Forster had, it seemed, the advantage in talent and authority and the gift of speech. He may be described as the first of the Liberal-Imperialists and on more than one occasion — notably the Crimean War, the Volunteer movement, and the prosecution of Governor Eyre — he had come into sharp conflict with the Manchester school. Although at heart one of the kindliest and most benevolent of men, his personal independence, a certain Yorkshire roughness of manner and an ill-concealed dislike of doctrinaire Radicalism had made him many enemies; and not even the Ballot Act, which he had carried in the teeth of Conservative opposition, could redeem the mortal offence his Education compromise had caused the Nonconformists. His enemies prevailed; and in the early days of 1875 Lord Hartington was duly installed in the vacant place.

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If the Opposition in 1874 were without a leader, the Government they confronted was without a policy. The Conservatives owed their success at the polls to the divisions and exhaustion of their opponents rather than to any action or even to any promises of their own. The new Prime Minister did not allow the violent attacks he had lately made upon the conduct of his predecessors to lead him into any reversal of their measures. The composition of the Cabinet was suited to a policy of 'honest humdrum.' With the exceptions of Lord Salisbury and Mr. Gathorne-Hardy, Mr. Disraeli's old colleagues were regarded as 'safe' rather than brilliant; and the one new man who joined them, Mr. Assheton Cross, did not seriously alter the prevailing impression.

At the head of a victorious party, with a substantial majority and an overflowing Exchequer, Mr. Disraeli could afford to be generous and was inclined to be conciliatory. He took occasion on the Address to pay a handsome tribute to Mr. Gladstone's long public service and personal fame. The Queen's Speech announced little more than a continuance of the non-contentious part of the programme of the late Liberal Government. The administration of the Irish Viceroy and Lord Northbrook's policy in India were praised and endorsed. The Chancellors, new and old, consulted together upon the reform of legal procedure. Sir Stafford Northcote bore witness, in terms almost of panegyric, to the accuracy of Mr. Gladstone's financial anticipations; and Mr. Gathorne-

Hardy accepted in their entirety Lord Cardwell's arrangements for the Army. 1874 ÆT. 25

In this last instance at least some disappointment was caused to their supporters by the complaisance of the new Ministers. The proposal to make Oxford one of the new territorial military centres had agitated the University ever since the adoption of the Cardwell scheme of Army reform in 1872. In October of that year a memorial, signed by nearly the whole of the teaching staff, had vigorously protested against a plan which it was somewhat fancifully alleged would prove detrimental by example to University discipline and undergraduate morality. Lord Salisbury, as Chancellor, had initiated a debate in the House of Lords in June 1873; and in May Mr. Auberon Herbert had moved in the Commons for a select committee. Mr. Cardwell, however, explained that the site was to be two miles from Oxford, that the number of officers and men to be stationed there was small, and that other University towns contained garrisons; and Mr. Auberon Herbert's motion was defeated (May 23, 1873) by 134 to 90.

Upon the accession of a Conservative Government and especially of a War Minister who had himself strongly supported Mr. Herbert only a year before, the motion was renewed on May 22 by Mr. Beresford Hope — not unreasonably, as it would seem — with greater expectations of success. Lord Randolph Churchill, who had taken the oath and his seat at the beginning of the session (March 6), seized the

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opportunity to deliver his maiden speech. Unlike the usual form of such productions, it was prepared at very short notice and was a rather crude debating effort. The Secretary of State, Mr. Gathorne-Hardy, explained that, since the land had been bought and the contractor was at work, he could not now reverse the decision to which his predecessor had come. He was supported by Mr. A. W. Hall, one of the members for Oxford City, who enlarged on the advantages of the place as a military centre, and complained that the University had already succeeded in keeping away the Great Western main line and the railway works.

Lord Randolph spoke from the University point of view. The proposal, he declared, amounted to the turning of an ancient University into something like a modern garrison town, the mingling of learned professors and thoughtful students with 'roystering soldiers and licentious camp followers.' If it were adopted, Oxford might take the place of Aldershot. The opinion of the City ought not to override that of the University. The University of Oxford had made the City of Oxford. The City depended for its very existence upon the University; and while it could forget, it could not forgive, that fact. To save 52,000*l.* the reputation and the future of the University were to be sold. What comparison could be made between the University of Oxford and the Universities of London, Dublin, and Edinburgh? Dublin was full of soldiers 'from the notorious disaffection and insubordination of the Irish people'; London because it

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was the Metropolis of the United Kingdom; and Edinburgh because it was the capital of Scotland. But the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge were founded before standing armies were known or garrison towns existed. The ablest and the most experienced leaders of the University had boldly said that, if they could prevent it, they would not have Oxford turned into a manufacturing town; they had protested against the town being overrun with railway roughs and navvies; they now objected to its being converted into a military station crowded with disorderly soldiers. Leave their quiet cloisters undisturbed and Oxford would remain the greatest University city in the world.

Sir William Harcourt, who followed, complimented the new member upon the ability of his speech. He professed himself greatly shocked that one who bore a name so inseparably associated with the glories of the British Army should have permitted himself to speak of 'roystering soldiers,' or that one who was elected to the House by a majority all of whom did not belong to the upper classes, should have spoken of 'railway roughs.' The Lord Mayor of Dublin, who spoke later, complained of what he described as an unfounded slander upon his constituents conveyed in the suggestion that a large army was stationed in Dublin for the purpose of keeping down a disloyal and disaffected population; and another member, a graduate of Trinity College, protested against the sneers at Dublin University which he said Lord Randolph's speech had contained.

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The motion was rejected by 170 to 91; and it is fair to say that none of the evils anticipated have yet occurred. The barracks have proved too far from Oxford to interfere practically with its life, though their presence is a convenience to University candidates for the Army, and the officers form a valuable addition to academic society.

Although it had chanced that Lord Randolph's first speech was against the Government, Mr. Disraeli hastened to write a friendly account of it to the Duchess of Marlborough:—

2 Whitehall Gardens, S.W.: May 23, 1874.

Dear Duchess, — You will be pleased to hear that Lord R. last night made a very successful *début* in the House of Commons. He said some imprudent things, which was of no consequence in the maiden speech of a young man, but he spoke with fire and fluency; and showed energy of thought and character, with evidence of resource.

With self-control and assiduity he may obtain a position worthy of his name, and mount. He replied to the new Conservative member for Oxford City, who also is a man of promise. I am going to Hughenden this morning, and am very busy, or I would have tried to have told you all this in person.

Yours sincerely,

D.

But the course of the session and of the years that followed offered few opportunities to young members for winning Parliamentary distinction. The waters of politics flowed smoothly and even sluggishly. The Public Worship Regulation Bill brought

Mr. Gladstone promptly from his retirement with six resolutions and much moving eloquence. During its passage political leaders were thrown into novel combinations and discords and the ordinary lines of party cleavage altogether disappeared. The House of Commons, with an unconscious disregard of its own rules, wrangled over the debates in the House of Lords. The Prime Minister described the Secretary of State for India as a 'master of gibes and flouts and jeers.' Mr. Gladstone and Lord Salisbury on the one hand confronted Sir William Harcourt and Mr. Disraeli on the other. But with this exception the sessions were dull and formal. Now and then an incident or a scene, like Mr. Plimsoll's outburst or Mr. Biggar's four-hour speech, excited a momentary interest or irritation. The purchase of the Suez Canal shares or the Royal Titles Bill or an academic debate upon Home Rule produced from time to time interesting discussions. The mild dissipation of Mr. Gladstone's surplus by his successor at the Treasury provoked a spurt of censure; but the temperature of public life continued low and its pulse languid. 1875 ÆT. 2

Even in a period of political activity there is small scope for the supporter of a Government. The Whips do not want speeches, but votes. The Ministers regard an oration in their praise or defence as only one degree less tiresome than an attack. The earnest party man becomes a silent drudge, tramping at intervals through lobbies to record his vote and wondering why he came to Westminster at all. Ambitious youth diverges into criticism and even

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hostility, or seeks an outlet for its energies elsewhere. Lord Randolph took scarcely any part in the Parliament of 1874. During its first three years he did not occupy more than an hour and a half of its time or attention. If he spoke at all, it was usually on matters connected with Woodstock. A question here and there, a few uncontroversial words during the debates on the Public Worship Regulation Bill, a sharp little impromptu speech on a motion for the release of Irish State prisoners in protest against an unkind comparison drawn by Mr. O'Connor Power between the soldiers who had become Fenians and the conduct of the first Duke of Marlborough in deserting William of Orange — these are almost the only references to his existence that 'Hansard' contains.

At the end of May 1875 Sir Charles Dilke moved for a return of the unreformed Corporations of England, making special reference to the circumstances and behaviour of the excessively unreformed borough of Woodstock. He attacked its self-elected corporation, which gave no account of its dealings with its property and contributed apparently only a small proportion to public purposes. He denounced its Mayor — the landlord of a small public-house, let to him at an absurdly low rate by the Corporation — who, having been summoned and convicted under pressure from the inhabitants for permitting drinking on his premises after hours, had said: 'I have always had a great respect for the police, but I shall never have again.' This cruel indictment brought Lord

Randolph to the rescue in an amusing speech, in which he exhibited such unexpected debating powers that it was alleged, and I dare say not without some truth, that he did not hear Sir Charles Dilke's speech for the first time in the House of Commons. He explained that the Foresters had met at the King's Arms and that 'their business had been so important as to last beyond closing time.' The application for the summons, he said, had been delayed because the police had been kept busy by the Shipton-on-Cherwell railway accident; the fines imposed had been trifling, and the Mayor had really said, 'I have always thought highly of the police of Woodstock, and shall henceforth think more highly of them than ever' — a version of his remarks which, it must be admitted, would seem to have indicated a very high degree of civic virtue. Lord Randolph then justified the expenditure of the Corporation, and deprecated 'the vivisection of an unfortunate Mayor and the persecution of a few poor Aldermen.' 'The great beauty of this speech,' said Sir William Harcourt, in reply, 'was that the noble lord, having admitted all the most damaging facts against himself, persuaded the House that they were of no importance whatever.' But at any rate Lord Randolph was successful in saving his constituents from inquiry, and the debate ended amid much good-humour on all sides. Indeed, when Sir Charles Dilke renewed his motion in the following year, there was quite a considerable attendance of members who had laughed at the first dispute and wanted to hear another sparring match.

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For the first year after Lord Randolph's marriage he and Lady Randolph lived in a small house in Curzon Street and indulged in all the gaieties and festivities of the London season, which in those days was much fuller and more prolonged than it is now. Balls and parties at great houses long since closed; Newmarket, Ascot, Goodwood, Cowes, and Trouville; filled the lives of a young couple in merry succession. Little else was thought of but enjoyment; and though the member for Woodstock liked discussing politics and took an intelligent interest in affairs, his attendances at the House were fitful and fleeting. The winter at Blenheim was occupied in hunting with the Heythrop Hounds and varied by occasional visits to Paris, where Lady Randolph's family was living. There he mixed in French society and met politicians and writers, and it was at this time that he formed a friendship with M. de Breteuil, which, like most of his intimate friendships, lasted the rest of his life. It was also during these days that he cultivated a taste for French novels, which ended by making him a fair French scholar, with that comprehensive, peculiar, and correct knowledge of the subtleties and idioms of the language which is often to be noticed in his letters.

In the spring of 1875 Lord and Lady Randolph installed themselves in a larger house in Charles Street, where they continued their gay life on a somewhat more generous scale than their income warranted. Fortified by an excellent French cook, they entertained with discrimination. The Prince of

Savony, photo

Lady Randolph Churchill.

Wales, who had from the beginning shown them much kindness, dined sometimes with them. Lord Randolph's college friend, Lord Rosebery, was a frequent visitor. One night Mr. Disraeli was among their guests, and an anecdote of his visit may be preserved. 'I think,' said Lord Randolph, discussing with his wife their party after it had broken up, 'that Dizzy enjoyed himself. But how flowery and exaggerated is his language! When I asked him if he would have any more wine, he replied: "My dear Randolph, I have sipped your excellent champagne; I have drunk your good claret; I have tasted your delicious port — I will have no more"!' 'Well,' said Lady Randolph, laughing, 'he sat next to me, and I particularly remarked that he drank nothing but a little weak brandy-and-water.' In August 1875, Lord Randolph went with his wife to America to spend ten bustling days at the Philadelphia Exhibition; and in the United States, as in Paris, he made the acquaintance of many politicians and persons of public note. 1875 ÆT. 26

Thus for two years his days were filled with social amusements and domestic happiness.

> '. . . All the world looked kind
> (As it will look sometimes with the first stare
> Which youth would not act ill to keep in mind).' [1]

He was embarrassed chiefly by the necessity, which time imposed, of having to select from a superfluity of pleasures. The House of Commons was but

[1] Byron, *Don Juan*, Canto ix. lxxxiv.

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one among various diversions. His occasional attendances contributed an element of seriousness to his life, good in itself, attractive by contrast, that provided, moreover, a justification (very soothing to the conscience) for not engaging in more laborious work. But for the recurring ailments to which his delicate constitution was subject and the want of money which so often teases a young married couple, his horizon had been without a cloud, his career without a care. But in the year 1876 an event happened which altered, darkened, and strengthened his whole life and character. Engaging in his brother's quarrels with fierce and reckless partisanship, Lord Randolph incurred the deep displeasure of a great personage. The fashionable world no longer smiled. Powerful enemies were anxious to humiliate him. His own sensitiveness and pride magnified every coldness into an affront. London became odious to him. The breach was not repaired for more than eight years, and in the interval a nature originally genial and gay contracted a stern and bitter quality, a harsh contempt for what is called 'Society,' and an abiding antagonism to rank and authority. If this misfortune produced in Lord Randolph characteristics which afterwards hindered or injured his public work, it was also his spur. Without it he might have wasted a dozen years in the frivolous and expensive pursuits of the silly world of fashion; without it he would probably never have developed popular sympathies or the courage to champion democratic causes.

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ÆT. 27

When Mr. Disraeli formed his Government, he had asked the Duke of Marlborough to go to Ireland as Viceroy. But the Duke, whose income could ill support such pretended magnificence, and who was quite content at Blenheim, declined. In 1876 the Prime Minister renewed his offer, and urged the special argument that if the Duke took his younger son with him the resentment in London would the sooner blow over in Lord Randolph's absence. Thus urged, the Duke reluctantly consented. Blenheim was handed over to housekeepers and agents and its household was bodily transported to the Viceregal Lodge. His father hoped that Lord Randolph could become the regular private secretary to the Lord-Lieutenant; but various difficulties interposed, and in the end it was decided that the appointment must be unofficial and unpaid. It was certain that his acceptance of 'an office of profit' would involve the expense of another election at Woodstock. It was uncertain whether, even after being re-elected, that particular post could be held jointly with a seat in the House of Commons.

Sir Michael Hicks-Beach (Chief Secretary to the Lord-Lieutenant) to the Duke of Marlborough

Chief Secretary's Lodge, Phœnix Park: Tuesday.

My dear Lord Duke, — The Irish Lord Chancellor is *very doubtful* whether the office of Private Secretary to the Lord-Lieutenant is, or is not, a 'new office.' I believe it appears from old almanacks that Lord-Lieutenants had private secretaries before the date of the Act, as one would naturally suppose. But in one case a *Bishop* appears to have held the appointment; and the Lord Chancellor thinks

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that since that time there may have been such changes made, either in the duties of the office or in the mode in which its holder is paid, as technically to make it a 'new office.' This, however, is to a great extent a question of fact; and I have therefore asked Sir Bernard Burke, who is *the* authority here upon such things, to look into the point and let me have his views in the shape of a memorandum, which I will forward to you.

Please let me know whether you have *quite* settled to come over on Monday night, 11th, reaching Dublin on Tuesday morning; as I must, in that event, summon a Privy Council for Tuesday. And I hope you have got the 'Queen's letter' and your patent, or will have them by that time.

Your Grace's very truly,

M. E. Hicks-Beach.

And again:—

Rockingham, Boyle: November 28, 1876.

My dear Lord Duke, — I fear you will think my letters a decided nuisance; but it is not my fault if I have to convey unpleasant intelligence.

At my request Lord Chancellor Ball has given me the enclosed opinion as to Lord Randolph's position. You will see that it does not in so many words touch the question whether Lord Randolph, if re-elected, could hold the office of your private secretary together with a seat in Parliament; but it rather implies that he could. I will, however, on my return to Dublin on Friday next, ask the Lord Chancellor to look into this point also.

I am bound to say that I attach great importance to any view which the Lord Chancellor may take on such a subject. Perhaps the only lawyer in Ireland whose opinion on it might be more valuable is, oddly enough, Mr. Butt. But his opinion could only be formally taken, and it would be hardly wise to do this.

Believe me

Your Grace's very sincerely,

M. E. Hicks-Beach.

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The state entry of the new Viceroy was conducted with its usual ceremony on December 11, 1876. Lord Randolph, who with his wife and child followed in the procession, made, amid the bustle and discomfort of this day, a life-long friend. Mr. FitzGibbon filled in 1877 the peculiar office of 'Law Adviser' at the Castle. The proper duty of the 'Adviser' was to answer legal questions put by justices of the peace all over Ireland, but he had also to give advice and opinions to all and sundry at the Castle, in the constabulary, lunacy, valuation, and a dozen other of the queerly-conceived and oddly-entangled departments through which the Government of Ireland is administered. 'After the Duke's public entry,' writes Lord Justice FitzGibbon, 'the legal maid-of-all-work attended with the rest of the officials in the throne room, to be presented. When I had made my bow I went back to my "files." Presently the door opened, and Kaye, the Assistant Under-Secretary, came in with a young man whom he introduced as "the Lord-Lieutenant's son," who "wanted to ask the Law Adviser a question." So he left us. A footman had jibbed — I suppose he did not like the look of Dublin Castle — and Lord Randolph wanted to know whether he could "sack" him without paying his fare back to London. He wanted to do this "as a lesson." I told him that, whatever the law was, the Lord-Lieutenant's son couldn't do it; and so began an acquaintance which ripened soon into a friendship that, full though it was of almost constant anxiety and apprehension, is one of the dearest memories of

1877 Æt. 28 my life. How it grew so fast I can hardly tell. I suppose electricity came in somewhere. . . .'

Five minutes' walk from the Viceregal Lodge, on the road to the Phœnix Park, there stands, amid clustering trees, a little, long, low, white house with a green verandah and a tiny lawn and garden. This is the 'Little Lodge' and the appointed abode of the private secretary to the Lord-Lieutenant. By a friendly arrangement with that gentleman Lord Randolph was permitted to occupy it; and here, for the next four years, his life was mainly lived. He studied reflectively the jerky course of administration at the Castle. He played chess with Steinitz, who was living in Dublin at this time; he explored Donegal in pursuit of snipe; he fished the lakes and streams of Ireland, wandering about where fancy took him; but wherever he went, and for whatever purpose, he interested himself in the people and studied the questions of the country. Disdaining the Ward Stag-hounds as not true sport, he hunted earnestly each winter with the Meath and Kildare. Often on a summer's afternoon he would repair to Howth, where the east coast cliffs rise up into bold headlands which would not be unworthy of the Atlantic waves. Here in good company he would make the 'periplus,' as he called it — or, in other words, sail round 'Ireland's Eye' — in the 16-foot boat of FitzGibbon's mate, Frank Lynch (the 'Admiral' of his letters), catch lobsters, and cook and eat them on the rocks of the island. In the evenings he played half-crown whist in Trinity College or at the

University Club or dined and argued with FitzGibbon and his friends. 'He was,' writes FitzGibbon, 'always on the move. He had the reputation of an "*enfant terrible*." Before long he had been in Donegal, in Connemara, and all over the place — "Hail fellow, well met" with everybody except the aristocrats and the old Tories; for he showed symptoms of independence of view and of likings for the company of "the Boys," which led to some friction with the staunch Conservatives and strong Protestants who regarded themselves as the salt of the earth.' 1877 ÆT. 28

FitzGibbon's Christmas parties at Howth — an institution justly celebrated since, but misunderstood by many, as a gathering of notable men — had begun in the bivouac of six close friends in a half-finished house on Innocents' Day, 1875. The number grew as the years passed by. Lord Randolph came first in 1877 and was accepted as its youngest member into a circle which included David Plunket, Edward Gibson, Baillie-Gage, Webb-Williamson, Professor Mahaffy, Morris Gibson, Father James Healy, Dr. Nedley, and other wise and merry Irishmen. The nights were consumed with whist, chaff, and tobacco; and the intervening days spent in climbing the Hill of Howth or listening to the 'words of wisdom from Morris' which became one of the constant features of the entertainment. These parties were always a great delight to Lord Randolph and during the rest of his life nothing, which could by any effort be thrust aside, was ever allowed to stand in the way of his visit.

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Lord Randolph had not been very long in Dublin when he was invited to move a resolution at the annual meeting of the Historical Society of Trinity College. This was a function of no little importance. The Historical Society may be said to correspond to the Oxford Union and members of the one are honorary members of the other. But it is the custom of the Irish body to inaugurate the session of each year with special ceremony. The President of the year, the Auditor, as he is called, presents and reads an address which he has himself prepared, and this then forms the subject of the speeches, in which various resolutions are moved. A distinguished company assembles. The platform is occupied by the leading figures of the Irish Church, Bench and Bar, and the body of the great dining-hall is filled to overflowing with keen-witted and usually uproarious undergraduates. Before this audience — the most critical outside the House of Commons he had yet ventured to address — Lord Randolph was now called.

The Auditor of the year, Mr. C. A. O'Connor, had chosen for his address 'The Relation of Philosophy to Politics,' a subject not inappropriate in a University that, as it proudly asserts, had 'nurtured the philosophic mind of Burke and cradled the patriotism of Grattan.' The first resolution, of which the Attorney-General had charge, was one of thanks to the Auditor, and Lord Randolph was required to propose the second: 'That the Auditor's address be printed and preserved in the archives of the society.'

He began by suitable acknowledgments of the honour of the invitation and in praise of the address. The Auditor, he said, had deprecated the slenderness of the connection between politics and philosophy at the present day and looked forward to a time when politics would be subservient to philosophy. Well, but philosophy was a very comprehensive word, and one would like to know to what system of philosophy the Auditor referred. There had been in the ancient world three principal schools of philosophy: there was the school of the Stoics — a most disagreeable school; the school of the Platonists — a most unintelligible school; and the school of the Epicureans — a most attractive school. 1877 ÆT. 2

'Perhaps,' he continued, 'I may be permitted to think that there is a connection, almost an intimate connection, between the philosophy of the Epicurean school and what is known as Conservative politics. To let things alone as much as we can; to accustom ourselves to look always at the brightest side; to legislate rather for the moment than for the dim and distant future, gratefully leaving that job to posterity, and thus making all classes comfortable — these are, as I understand them, the maxims of what we know as Conservative politics.' He went on to speak of Ireland in 1877 and to praise 'New Ireland,' a book by Mr. A. M. Sullivan, then lately published, which had excited much attention. All this and more, delivered with much grace and humour, made a most favourable impression on the assembly. The newspapers in their articles and accounts the next

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day were flattering to the orator and the confidence, which his Irish friends were beginning to feel in his abilities, was sensibly increased.

Before Lord Randolph had been many months in Ireland he began to form strong opinions of his own on Irish questions and to take a keen interest in politics. He was soon in touch with all classes and parties. He watched Irish administration from the inside, and heard what was said about it out-of-doors. All the official circle were quite ready to impart their information to the son of the Lord-Lieutenant. At Howth and in FitzGibbon's company he met all that was best in the Dublin world. He became an active member of the Dublin University Club and a frequent guest at the Fellows' Table in Trinity College. His relations in Ireland, the Londonderrys and Portarlingtons, impressed him with the high Tory view. He became very friendly with Mr. Butt, who with Father Healy often dined at the Little Lodge and laboured genially to convert Lady Randolph to Home Rule. Indeed, he saw a good deal more of Nationalist politicians than his elders thought prudent or proper. The fruits of this varied education were not long concealed by its green leaves.

A sentence at the end of a speech which he made during the session of 1877 on some small matter of Irish administration reveals the general current of his mind. He expressed his regret for having said — in his maiden speech three years before — that Dublin was 'a seditious capital.' 'I have since learned to

know Ireland better.' It was time indeed that some Englishman should 'learn to know Ireland better.' Under a glassy surface forces were gathering for a violent upheaval. Mr. Butt's leadership of the Irish party gave no pleasure to his countrymen. He had united the various sections of Irish members in a policy of conciliatory agitation for Home Rule. He had, indeed, invented the name 'Home Rule' — since become the very war-cry of prejudice — to soothe and reassure British minds likely to be offended by the word 'Repeal.' His authority was now to be seized by a young man of very different temper.

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Parnell was a squire, reared upon the land, with all those qualities of pride, mettle, and strength which often spring from the hereditary ownership of land. Butt was a lawyer, and his world was a world of words — fine words, good words, wise words — woven together in happy combinations, adroitly conceived, attractively presented; but only words. Butt cherished and honoured the House of Commons. Its great traditions warmed his heart. He was proud to be a member of the most ancient and illustrious representative assembly in the world. He was fitted by his gifts to adorn it. Parnell cared nothing for the House of Commons, except to hate it as a British institution. He disliked speeches. He despised rhetoric. Butt trusted in argument; Parnell in force. Butt was a constitutionalist and a man of peace and order; Parnell was the very spirit of revolution, the instrument of hatred, the agent of relentless war.

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The conduct of English parties did not strengthen the position of Mr. Butt. They listened to his arguments with great good-humour, and voted against him when he had quite finished. He was regarded as an exemplary politician and his Parliamentary methods were considered most respectable. Ministers paid him many compliments. They and their followers and their Liberal opponents contributed cogent and interesting speeches to the Home Rule debates which he inaugurated year after year. Mr. Disraeli in particular made a very brilliant and witty speech upon the subject in 1874. But they conceded him nothing. No British Government could have desired a more temperate, courteous, or reasonable opponent. Never were courtesy and reason more poorly served. The Irish legislation for which Mr. Butt pressed was neglected by the Government and disdained by the House. Session after session proved barren. At every meeting of Parliament Mr. Butt was ready with his programme. At every prorogation he departed empty-handed. The debates on Wednesday afternoons were so largely occupied with his proposals that the Cabinet and the Conservative party were wearied with perpetual Irish discussions. 'What am I to say to this?' asked the Law Officer, on one of these occasions, of the Prime Minister. 'Speak,' replied Disraeli, 'for fourteen minutes and say nothing' — a modest request well within the compass of a semi-legal, semi-political functionary. This was typical of the attitude of power towards Irish affairs.

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In the session of 1876 nine Bills dealing with land, education, rating, electoral reform, Parliamentary reform, judicial and municipal reform — all burning Irish questions — were introduced by the Irish party. Few were considered. All, except two of minor importance, were cast out. The claims of Ireland upon Parliament were real and urgent. The Chief Secretary pressed upon the Cabinet earnestly, but in vain, the necessity for land legislation. Neither the Parliamentary force nor time could be found. Mr. Butt introduced a Land Bill of his own — very tame by comparison with subsequent enactments. It was rejected by 290 votes to 56. Nearly thirty measures dealing with the land question alone, brought forward by Irish members between 1870 and 1880, perished in the wilderness.

It should not be inferred that no Irish Bills were carried by the Government. Indeed, some of the measures passed during this Parliament are still the law on the matters to which they relate. But the Chief Secretary was the youngest member of the Cabinet, and the Irish Tories in the House, led by Mr. Kavanagh, being more numerous and even more powerful than in our own time, were able to make anyone who displayed a liking for change sensible of their severe displeasure. On one occasion indeed, when Sir Michael Hicks-Beach had extended Government support to the 'Municipal Privileges Bill' and to a Bill for assimilating the Irish municipal franchise to the English, they lost no time in sending a round-robin to the head of

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the Government requesting him to dismiss the delinquent Minister. Disraeli returned a suitable reply to this; but the Chief Secretary was forced to refuse the concessions he had desired to make. And although from year to year he succeeded in passing a series of Bills dealing with such subjects as Licensing, Public Health, Lunacy, Jury Qualifications, Prisons, County Courts, and Intermediate Education, he could not free Irish Parliamentary action from discredit in Irish eyes.

Mr. Butt was patient; he believed in patience; he counselled patience to his followers. The majority of them were willing to accept his views. He was opposed to 'a policy of exasperation.' He thought that reason would prevail and that violence of any kind would estrange 'our best friends in England.' He believed, not without foundation, that to injure a representative institution was to strike democracy at its heart. 'Gentlemen first, patriots afterwards' was the motto of his followers. And in return they received that form of respect which, being devoid of the element of fear, is closely akin to contempt. Had the Government of Mr. Disraeli been gifted with foresight beyond the scope of ordinary British Administrations they would by timely concessions, by some few substantial gifts, have vindicated constitutional agitation. But they went their way, living from hand to mouth and from week to week, meeting their daily troubles with such expedients as came to hand. 'If pure advocacy — able, earnest, courteous — could have won the Irish cause,' writes

Parnell's biographer, 'Mr. Butt would have succeeded. It could not, and he failed hopelessly.'[1] A new leader with new weapons was at hand. 1877 Æt. 28

Judged by all the available standards, Mr. Butt's position as leader of the Irish party at the beginning of 1877 was secure. He was the most brilliant Irishman in Parliament. He had defended, at much personal sacrifice and with immense ability, the Fenian prisoners of the 'sixties. He was the founder of the Home Rule League and apparently its perennial president. The whole Irish party in the House of Commons was at his back. Whatever of Parliamentary prestige can be enjoyed without executive power supported him. Moreover, in all the personal relations of life he had great advantages. He was genial, tolerant, and kindly, with a smile and a handshake for all, and generous to a fault with his personal friends. Parnell had nothing to offer. He was almost unknown and, even so, distrusted as a landlord. He was a young man with a forbidding manner and almost inarticulate. In a nation preternaturally eloquent he could scarcely jerk out his most familiar thoughts. No conflict could well have appeared more unequal in conditions or more contrarily decisive in result than the duel between these two men.

Obstruction was an ugly novelty to the Parliament of 1874. Some ominous improprieties had marked the resistance to the Irish Church Bill, the Ballot Bill, and the Bill for the Abolition of Purchase

[1] B. O'Brien, *Life of Parnell*, second edition, i. 163.

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in the Army, during Mr. Gladstone's Administration; but no serious deadlock had arisen. Suddenly the House of Commons awoke to the fact that half-a-dozen of its members were persistently and deliberately engaged in paralysing its business. The procedure of those days offered a virgin field. No closure terminated the debate. No Supply rule regulated financial business. No restriction was imposed upon the right of members to move to adjourn the debate or the House or to report progress in Committee. The minority was restrained only by custom and awe. It now appeared that a few members were resolved to destroy conventions which had been consecrated by centuries of observance.

The mutineers were so few in number that they excited almost as much surprise as irritation. Public reprobation, newspaper abuse, Parliamentary disgust, were directed upon them in vain. The leaders of the Opposition vied in terms of condemnation with Her Majesty's Ministers. The Irish party was shocked and silent. Nothing availed against men whose only object was to inflict an outrage upon Parliament, and who gauged their success by the indignation and sorrow they created. At length, during one weary sitting, in an evil hour for his own authority, Mr. Butt was persuaded to denounce the obstructives and to declare, amid resounding English cheers, his deep detestation of their tactics. But the censure which was so general in England awoke its counter-cry across St. George's Channel. The measure of British hatred and contempt became the measure of

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Irish sympathy and partisanship. 'Parliamentarianism,' writes Mr. Barry O'Brien drolly, 'was apparently becoming a respectable thing. It might be possible to touch it without being contaminated.' The Fenian organisations, long disdainful of Mr. Butt's constitutional methods and confronted at every session with their utter futility, turned with interest to the new man who moved with unconcerned deliberation into the centre of the stage and dealt with others as though it was his birthright to command and theirs to serve him. Delicate and subterranean negotiations followed with secret societies who were reluctant to compromise the purity of their revolutionary creeds by any paltering with half-measures or pseudo-constitutional agitation. Sympathetic acquiescence — if not, indeed, actual co-operation — was at length almost unconsciously conceded. In two years Mr. Butt was broken. The Home Rule Confederation cast him off; his friends sorrowfully but unhesitatingly deposed him; his followers enlisted with the conqueror. Mr. Butt's end was melancholy. Hunted and harassed by debt and illness, worn with prolonged exertions and mortified by supersession and defeat, he lived only to see his authority exercised by another and the land for which he had laboured, not unfaithfully, darkened by famine and smouldering with revolt. He died early in May 1879 and the usurper strode forward to encounter many adventures and a still more tragic fate.

Lord Randolph Churchill was a silent, though not unmoved, spectator of the early stages of this

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drama in the House of Commons, and in the autumn, at the dinner of the Woodstock Agricultural and Horticultural Show (September 18), he expressed his opinion upon them with unguarded freedom, much to the astonishment and displeasure of his family. This speech is the first which reveals the perfectly independent movement of his mind and the shrewd insight which guided it. He could not vote for Home Rule, he said, because without the Irish members more than one-third of the life and soul of the House of Commons would be lost. 'Who is it, but the Irish, whose eloquence so often commands our admiration, whose irresistible humour compels our laughter, whose fiery outbursts provoke our passions?' Banish them, and the House of Commons, composed only of Englishmen and Scotsmen, would sink to the condition of a vestry. 'I have no hesitation in saying that it is inattention to Irish legislation that has produced obstruction. There are great and crying Irish questions which the Government have not attended to, do not seem to be inclined to attend to, and perhaps do not intend to attend to — the question of intermediate and higher education, and the question of the assimilation of the municipal and Parliamentary electoral privileges to English privileges — and as long as these matters are neglected, so long will the Government have to deal with obstruction from Ireland.' Truths, he said, were always unpalatable, and he who spoke them very seldom got much thanks; but that did not render them less true. England had years of

wrong, years of crime, years of tyranny, years of oppression, years of general misgovernment, to make amends for in Ireland. The Act of Union was passed, and in the passing of it all the arsenal of political corruption and chicanery was exhausted, to inaugurate a series of remedial and healing measures; and if that Act had not been productive of these effects, it would be entitled to be unequivocally condemned by history, and would, perhaps, be repealed by posterity. It was for these reasons that he should propose no extreme measures against Irish members, believing as he did that the cure for obstruction lay not in threats, not in hard words, but in conciliatory legislation. 1877 Æt. 28

This speech attracted attention in various quarters. Mr. Parnell, who spoke three days later in Paisley, alluded to it at some length and declared that if the Government would pass certain measures dealing with the questions mentioned, they would not be disturbed next session by Irish obstruction. The *Morning Post* expressed its displeasure in a leading article. 'This is the language of Mr. Parnell and his colleagues, and it is the argument on which the Home Rule movement as well as the Obstructionist movement is based.' As to Lord Randolph's remarks about the Union — 'It is no exaggeration to say that neither Mr. Parnell nor Mr. Butt could have used stronger language in support of their respective lines of action. But it is not an Irish Rome [*sic*] Ruler or an Irish Obstructive who has used it. It is the Conservative representative of an English borough and the son of the Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland.'

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But it was Sir Michael Hicks-Beach who read Lord Randolph with the greatest surprise. He lost no time in writing a remonstrance to the Duke of Marlborough.

The Duke of Marlborough to Sir Michael Hicks-Beach.

Guisachan: September 25, 1877.

My dear Beach, — The only excuse I can find for Randolph is that he must either be mad or have been singularly affected with local champagne or claret. I can only say that the sentiments he has indulged in are purely his own; and, more than this, I was as much amazed as you in reading them, and had no conception that he entertained such opinions. The conjuncture is most unfortunate and ill-timed; but at the same time it must be remembered that though my son, and occupying by leave P. Bernard's house, he is not in any way officially connected with me, and the assumption therefore that he represented my opinions would be both unwarranted and unfair. I quite appreciate your consideration in making no allusion to his remarks, and perhaps, unless it should be absolutely required, the less notice drawn to them the better. Should you, however, feel it to be necessary to correct misapprehensions consequent on his speech, I conceive you are perfectly entitled to do so. I can only repeat that I am extremely annoyed at the folly of his utterance, which I believe on reflection he will regret himself. Perhaps, if I might suggest, a letter from yourself to him in your official position and responsible for Irish business in Parliament might be the best way of dealing with the occurrence.

Yours very sincerely,

MARLBOROUGH.

These chronicles do not record the explanations or rebukes which must have followed; but Lord

Randolph by no means withdrew or modified what he had said, and is found writing a few days later to the *Morning Post* in a most impenitent mood: — 1877 Æt. 28

Junior Carlton Club: September 22.

Sir, — In your article of this morning on my speech at Woodstock you say: 'But what is even more faulty in Lord Randolph Churchill's speech is the assertion, which he indirectly makes, that the Act of Union had not been productive of those remedial measures which, as he rightly contends, are the only justification of the means by which it was passed.' Owing to an omission in the report of my remarks you have unintentionally misrepresented me. I said that the Act of Union was intended to inaugurate, *and had inaugurated,* a series of healing and remedial measures, and I intimated that perseverance in a course of conciliatory legislation for Ireland might be a sure cure for obstruction, and a still further defence of the methods used to pass the Act of Union.

Again, you say I not only extenuated the conduct of the obstructionists, but justified it. Nothing that I said at Woodstock admits of this construction. I never even discussed the conduct of the obstructionists; I merely discussed the remedies for obstruction which had been proposed by many public men and by a great portion of the English press. Surely you would not have said that Liberal members, in advocating the Irish Land Act and the Irish Church Act, were extenuating and justifying the Fenian movement.

You remark, further, that what I called 'unpalatable plain truths' were certainly unpalatable, but were not true. Yet the misgovernment of Ireland before the Act of Union, and the methods used to pass that Act, are now matters of history. These were two of my 'plain truths'; and the third, that the great questions on which Irish feeling is most deeply interested have been neglected during the last four years, is in my opinion equally undeniable. You accuse me of forgetting the Judicature Act, the improved position of

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the National school teachers, the grant of 10,000*l.* towards the Irish fisheries. I do not for a moment forget them, but would think it a mockery to say much of them to a people hungering for moderate progressive reform, such as we have had in this country, of their political, municipal, and educational institutions.

It was because I hope that these questions may be settled by the Conservative party, and not by the Liberal party or the Home Rule party, that I made the remarks on which you have animadverted; little dreaming, however, that the utterances of so obscure an individual as myself, in the quiet rural locality of Woodstock, would attract the attention of any portion of the Metropolitan press. As, however, they have attracted your comments, I am confident that you will, with your usual love of fair play, insert this attempt of mine at explanation.

I remain, your obedient servant,

RANDOLPH S. CHURCHILL.

As the differences between Butt and Parnell widened and developed into the supremacy of the latter, Lord Randolph seems to have been more amenable to his father's influence; for in 1879 he voted *against* a resolution for the assimilation of Irish to English privileges, and explained that, although the theoretic argument was overwhelming, the immediate extension of the franchise in Ireland would destroy the moderate and constitutional Home Rulers and secure the ascendency of the more lawless and embittered classes.

During the winter of 1877 Lord Randolph devoted himself, with the assistance of a young Dublin graduate, to the study of Irish intermediate education. He took the question up deliberately, as the first step

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in public life and a lesson in political work. He spared no pains. He sounded every well of information. He consulted every shade of Irish opinion. He questioned a host of Irish pedagogues and wrote to all the headmasters of the English public schools. An evidence of his activities is provided by a letter from him to the *Freeman's Journal*, published on the last day of the year, on the extinction of the Irish diocesan schools. These had been set up by Queen Elizabeth under the Act of 1570. They were 'diocesan' only because the diocese was a more convenient division than a county and were not meant to be under Church control. The masters were to be appointed by the Lord-Lieutenant and the endowment was in the form of a charge on the property of the Church. But the system had only been partially established and the Irish Church Act of 1869 had, by a strange blunder, treated the schools as Church property, and, as amended in 1872, it allowed the masters to compound like incumbents, a proportion of the commutation money accruing to the 'Church Surplus.' Money had therefore actually been diverted from education and Lord Randolph was intent on reclaiming an equivalent sum for intermediate instruction.

But the main purpose of his labours was to draw up a pamphlet taking the form of a lettter to his friend Sir J. Bernard Burke, Ulster King-at-Arms — who, it appears, had first interested him in this question — and dealing completely with Irish intermediate education. This letter was finished in

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the beginning of 1878, was published in Dublin, and sold at 6*d*. It showed, on the evidence of various Royal Commissions, that intermediate education in Ireland was positively declining, yet that a system of intermediate education had existed since the days of Elizabeth, in the shape of Royal Free Schools, the Diocesan Grammar Schools, and the Erasmus Smith Schools, which only required rearrangement and development. It proposed to extend the system of Royal Free Schools and to provide more money out of the Church surplus. The religious difficulty was to be surmounted by appointing lay Catholic masters in Catholic districts and Protestant masters in Protestant districts, with a conscience clause, control by local boards (chiefly lay) and a scholarship system, so as to enable the religious minority in any district to get education elsewhere. This plan, admirable in itself, would probably have been found to underrate the religious difficulty and especially the reluctance of the Roman Catholic Church, evinced in every country, to tolerate education that it does not absolutely control.

Lord Randolph's early efforts in the cause of Irish education were not confined to Ireland or to pamphleteering. From the day when he took it up to the close of his life, he never ceased his endeavours to promote progress and reform and to satisfy real wants and aspirations in that department. In the session of 1878, with a perseverance and persistence which disgusted the Irish Tories, he brought forward a motion (June 4) for a Select Committee of

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the House of Commons to inquire into the condition and management of the endowed schools of Ireland, with instructions to report 'how far those endowments are at present promoting, or are applicable to the promotion of, intermediate education in that country, without distinction of class or religion.' In support of this he delivered a considerable speech, moderate and argumentative in tone and crowded with figures and quotations, to prove the many abuses and anomalies of the Irish education system and the urgent need of co-ordination and reform.

He had induced Mr. Chamberlain, with whom he was already on friendly terms, to second the motion; and the case unfolded in these two speeches was sufficiently strong to impress the Government and the House. The Irish Nationalists were profuse in their expressions of pleasure that English members should display so keen an interest in an Irish question. The O'Conor Don expressed his deep obligation and that of all the members connected with Ireland, to Lord Randolph for the manner in which he had introduced the motion. The Government, through its Chief Secretary, Mr. Lowther (Sir Michael Hicks-Beach having by this time been transferred to the Colonial Office), offered, in lieu of a select Committee, a small Commission specially appointed to inquire into the condition, management, and revenues of the schools; and this being thought generally acceptable, the motion was withdrawn. The Commission was duly appointed, Lord Rosse being Chairman and Mr. FitzGibbon and Lord

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Randolph both among its members. It laboured zealously and Lord Randolph travelled all over Ireland — north, west, and south — collecting information and examining schools. In what manner its researches issued ultimately, but not until 1885, in an Act of Parliament will presently be related.

The session of 1878 was dominated by the Eastern Question. The Russian armies were at the gates of Constantinople. The British fleet lay at Besika Bay. The early months of the year were passed under the shadow of imminent war. Resignations broke the Cabinet circle; patriotic choruses resounded in the streets; the Reserves were called out, native Indian troops were brought to Malta, and a vote of credit of six millions was granted by the House of Commons. The course of British diplomacy and action in Lord Beaconsfield's hands was tortuous and dramatic. Absolutely supreme in the Cabinet after Lord Derby's withdrawal, the Prime Minister led an enthusiastic party and a puzzled nation through the Salisbury-Schouvaloff secret agreement and the Anglo-Turkish Convention to the Congress of Berlin, to the acquisition of Cyprus, to 'Peace with Honour' and the Knightsbridge banquet. It is not my purpose to comment on this or to compare it with that other note which now began again to resound with ever-growing vehemence and intensity through the land, until it broke in a storm of passionate appeal and triumphant eloquence from Midlothian. Never in their life-long conflict were Mr. Gladstone and his great antagonist so fiercely opposed. Their differences cut down to

the roots of thought. In policy, in principle, in feeling, in aspiration, they clashed together at every point, large or small, of political method or morality, and behind them all Britain was divided into two furious camps. On both sides their colleagues in Parliament faded into insignificance. On both sides their followers in the country were whole-hearted in their allegiance. The Conservative majorities in the House of Commons were tremendous and inflexible on every issue. The great newspapers, the powers of fashion and clubland, the pledged partisans in the constituencies, had never before found a leader so much to their temper as Lord Beaconsfield. Outside Parliament, with its baffled and divided Opposition and triumphant Ministry, the Liberal electors hung upon Mr. Gladstone's words as though he were, as he often seemed, inspired. And while the imposing array of Toryism marched proudly and confidently forward, enormous multitudes gathered eagerly and not less confidently to encounter them. 1878 ÆT. 29

It is perhaps only in these great stirrings of the national mind that a man may discover to which of the main groupings of political opinion he naturally belongs. In all this conflict Lord Randolph Churchill took no public part. An occasional sarcasm used at some small function, an unadvertised abstention from some important division, might have revealed his personal inclinations. But he did nothing to attract public notice and it is only from his private letters that we may learn how decided were his sympathies and by what circumstances he was prevented from

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action which might easily have altered his whole career.

Parliament met in January 1878, amid conditions of the keenest excitement and of grave crisis, and the Government forthwith demanded their vote of credit for six millions to make special naval and military preparations. Having listened to Ministerial explanations Mr. Forster moved a reasoned amendment amounting to a flat refusal.[1] After a debate extending over a week, disturbed by the wildest reports from the East, Mr. Forster was glad to withdraw his amendment, and upon the motion to go into Committee the Government obtained a majority of more than three to one (295 to 96).

Lord Randolph Churchill to Sir Charles Dilke.

St. James's Club, Piccadilly: February 7, 1878.

My dear Sir Charles Dilke, — As I suppose this debate will come to a close with an enormous and disproportionate majority for the Government, and as I think the Opposition have made their stand on unfortunate ground, and that another fight might yet be fought with far greater chances of commanding sympathy in the country, I want to know whether, if an Address to the Crown, praying Her Majesty to use her influence at the Conference in favour of the widest possible freedom to Bulgaria, Bosnia, Herzegovina, Thessaly, and Epirus, and in favour of totally and finally putting an end to direct Turkish Government in these

[1] 'That this House, having been informed in her Majesty's gracious Speech that the conditions on which her Majesty's neutrality is founded have not been infringed by either belligerent engaged in the war in the East of Europe, and having since received no information sufficient to justify a departure from the policy of neutrality and peace, sees no reason for adding to the burdens of the people by voting unnecessary supplies.'

provinces, was moved by me from the Tory side of the House, it would be supported by the Liberal party. I think I could almost make sure of a strong Home Rule vote on this. I think some Conservatives would support it. If Northcote does not give some very clear information as to what is going to be the policy of the Government, I think a motion of this sort should be made on the Report. The real cry for the country is — not sympathy with Russia, still less with Turkey, but complete freedom for the Slav and Hellenic nationalities. 1878 — Æt. 29

I am off to Ireland to-night. I don't care enough for the Government to vote for them. . . . I shall see Butt in Dublin and shall sound him on what I have written to you. My address is Phœnix Park, Dublin.

Yours truly,

Randolph S. Churchill.

And the next day: —

The Castle, Dublin: February 8, 1878.

Many thanks for your two letters. As you say, while everything is in such an uncertain state nothing can be done. The Government have too great an advantage; but I think if we are led into taking any decisive steps hostile to Russia a great effort should be made for an authoritative declaration that the ultimate aim and object of any move on our part is the complete freedom and independence of the Slav nationality, as opposed to any reconstruction of the Turkish Empire. This, I am sure, should be the line for the Liberal party and not the 'Peace-at-any-price' cry, which it is evident the country will not have. In this I shall be ready to co-operate heartily as far as my poor efforts can be any good. It is just possible that if any movement of this kind be made, it would be better to originate it from the Conservative side of the House. I regret to see so much excitement getting up among the masses. It is dangerous material for Beaconsfield to work on. Will you think me very foolish or visionary if I say I

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look for a Republican form of government for Bulgaria, Bosnia, and Herzegovina as far more to be preferred to setting up some Russian or German Prince as a puppet under the name of a constitutional monarchy? Perhaps if these ideas seem at all to your liking, and if you think they will command the support of the Liberal party, you would advise me what would be the most favourable moment for bringing them forward. I shall have some conversation with Butt, and have great hope of securing a solid Irish vote on any proposition which might seem to favour the principle of self-government for nationalities.

A few days later he telegraphed to Sir Charles Dilke: —

Careysville, Fermoy.

I shall be in London Monday morning. Am not ambitious of taking any prominent part, unless it might contribute to the advantage of ideas which we have in common, that a motion should be made from my side of the House. I leave it absolutely to your judgment.

CHURCHILL.

On this Sir Charles Dilke wrote to Lord Granville, who replied: —

18 Carlton House Terrace.

My dear Dilke, — Such a motion as Lord Randolph Churchill proposes, supported by a certain number of Conservatives, might be well worth consideration, but I doubt his getting any Conservative support, and a contingent of Home Rulers would hardly justify us for making another attack on Plevna just now, with the probable alternative of a crushing defeat or withdrawal in the face of the enemy. I gather that you are doubtful. What did Hartington think?

Yours sincerely,

GRANVILLE.

Meanwhile Lord Randolph wrote again: — 1878 Æt. 29

Lord Randolph Churchill to Sir Charles Dilke.

February 15, 1878.

I have sent you a telegram which I think you will understand. I am sure that my views, whatever they are worth, are in accordance with your speech and Harcourt's and Gladstone's on the question of the future policy of this country. I am convinced under the present circumstances no motion should be unduly hastened on. There is lots of time. If I were asked to move a resolution, my speech would be an attack on Chaplin, Wolff, and the rest of the pro-Turkish party, confidence in the Government, and an invitation to the Liberal party to act as a whole. I feel I am awfully young to endeavour to initiate such a motion; but I am so convinced of the soundness of our view that I would risk a smash willingly to have that properly brought forward. If only your party would agree as a whole to support such a resolution moved from my side, the Government would at the best have only a majority of 80 after 190; and that would be a check. I shall see Butt before arriving in London, and endeavour to make him take up a position on this question. The Government seem to be doing their level best to keep the peace, and perhaps another debate would not be unwelcome to them.

Lord Hartington, however, agreed with Lord Granville that it would be useless to attack again without assurance of substantial Conservative support. Sir Charles Dilke accordingly pressed Lord Randolph as to who might be expected to vote with him; but Lord Randolph could not be sure even of one, though he hoped that Mr. Spencer Walpole, the ex-Home Secretary, would do so. The question of

1878 balloting for a private members' night seems also to
Æt. 29 have been considered.

Lord Randolph Churchill to Sir Charles Dilke.

Castle Bernard, Bandon.

My dear Sir Charles, — I shall be over in London on the 26th instant, and I think it will be time enough then to make my motion. I should not like to make it unless it would command the support of a large number of members. Such support could only come from your side. I think the Conservative party are gone mad. Their speeches are calculated to provoke war. As it is so uncertain whether we shall go to war or a conference, I think I had better wait a little as — though the motion should, I think, be made in any case — the terms would vary very much according to either alternative. . . . I know of no one but Forsyth whom I could ask to ballot for me. If it commands much support, I should like to press it even to a division. Cowen's speech and the vociferous cheers of the Conservative party evidently show that the idea of the integrity and independence of the Turkish Empire is still predominant on our side; and against that I would try to go a great way. I send a sketch of the motion, and I should of course be very glad if you would second one of this nature.

Yours very truly,

Randolph S. Churchill.

Draft of Motion.

That, in view of the extreme suffering so long undergone by the Slav, Bulgarian, and Hellenic nationalities of Bosnia, Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Thessaly, and Epirus, and considering that the Tukrish rule over these provinces has now been definitely put an end to, the efforts of Her Majesty's Government should in the opinion of the House of Commons be principally directed towards the establishment of complete freedom and independence for the population of these provinces.

All this, however, remained unknown. The Conservative Administration pursued their course, with the unbroken assent of their followers and amid the acclamations of London Society, through a succession of diplomatic sensations and Parliamentary triumphs, towards a vast electoral disaster. 1878 Æt. 29

Devoted as he was to his party, Lord Randolph was by this time thoroughly out of sympathy with them in their Irish and foreign policy. The great Minister whose talk had fascinated him at Blenheim ten years before inspired him no longer. He describes Lord Derby's resignation as 'a thunderclap.' 'I cannot,' he writes to his father, 'like the war tactics. Calling out the Reserves is like throwing down the glove to Russia, and I fear she will not hesitate to take it up.' He was irritated by the movement of Indian troops to Malta. His college friend, Lord Rosebery — the partner of those early conversations — was now the ardent supporter of Mr. Gladstone's Midlothian campaign. A very little, I think, at this time might have led Lord Randolph into open quarrel with the Government. Indeed, it is not improbable, had he in fact moved his resolution as he wished, that he would have been driven out of the Conservative ranks altogether. When even Radicals and Liberals like Cowen and Roebuck were proud and glad to swim with the stream, when every man who stood against it, was liable to be called a 'Russian' or even a traitor, a single Tory-Democrat must have been overwhelmed. Lord Randolph no doubt realised this; for he must have felt that, unless he could take

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striking and decisive action, it was useless taking any action at all. But he seems to have looked for an occasion to strike at the Government safely, and for a victim to appease his wrath. He found the first in the County Government Bill and the second in Mr. Sclater-Booth.

The rejection of this measure, which proposed to transfer county government from Quarter Sessions to boards elected partly by the county magistrates and partly by Boards of Guardians, was moved, upon its coming into the Committee, by Mr. Rylands (March 7) from the Liberal benches. Lord Randolph seconded the motion on totally different grounds and in a different tone. Inspired by a strong hostility to the Government, he made his attack from that quarter most dangerous to a Conservative Minister. The Bill was contrary to Tory principles. The Cabinet were not responsible for it. All their time had been taken up by considering how they could possibly get the Fleet into the Dardanelles, and now their whole time was taken up in considering how they could possibly get the Fleet out of the Dardanelles. In these agitating circumstances it would be highly unfair to hold them responsible for 'the legislative freaks of a minor colleague.'

Wrath was concentrated on the President of the Local Government Board, who would annihilate Quarter Sessions and descend in all the pomp of Ministerial authority and 'a double-barrelled name,' so often associated with mediocrity, upon some unfortunate and over-awed Board of Guardians.

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A President of the Local Government Board might deal, if he chose, with amendments to the Poor Law or with sanitary questions, or with the salaries of inspectors of nuisances. He should not come down to the House, with all the appearance of a great lawgiver, to reform according to his own views and to improve in his little way the leading features of the British Constitution. He urged the Conservative party not to barter away the old institutions of the country for such 'Brummagem trash.' Lord Randolph professed himself utterly unable, though he had ransacked the whole arsenal, to find words in which to characterise the measure. In default he described it as 'just the sort of little dodge that would be proposed by a President of the Local Government Board called upon to legislate on a great question;' 'another of those futile attempts to make that impossible mixture of Radical principles and Conservative precautions,' and 'to conciliate the masses by the concession of principles dear to them, which concessions were immediately nullified or modified by the details of the legislation.' 'The Government think the populace will be deceived. They are themselves the only dupes. "O infortunati nimium sua si mala norint."' 'I have raised,' he concluded, 'the last wail of the expiring Tory party. They have undergone a good deal. They have swallowed an immense amount of nastiness. They have had their banner dragged along many a muddy path. It has been slopped in many a filthy puddle, until it is so altered that nobody can possibly recognise it.

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I shall cry "No!" when this motion is put from the Chair; and if I can only get any support — I care not whence it comes or from what motive it is given — I should be prepared to offer an opposition to this most Radical and democratic measure, this crowning desertion of Tory principles, this supreme violation of political honesty.'

Such language had not been heard in the House of Commons since Lord Cranborne had fought the Franchise Bill, and, coming as it did from a member who so seldom addressed the House, at a time when party discipline was so good and the prestige of the Government so high, it created quite a commotion. Mr. Chamberlain, in following, criticised the Bill from the extreme Radical's standpoint, but was markedly friendly in his reference to Lord Randolph's speech. By the time he had finished, the surprise of the Ministerialists had subsided sufficiently to reveal their wrath, and they protested at once against the attack. Mr. Chaplin, whose political antagonism to Lord Randolph was fated to develop early, retorted roughly that if such were his opinions he should 'lose not a moment in going over to the other side of the House' — advice which is often given and sometimes accepted. The unfortunate Mr. Sclater-Booth had hardly the spirit to reply. The Bill had passed its second reading by a large majority. Its further progress was delayed by Nationalist obstruction and Ministerial apathy. It was never again debated by the House, and on July 15 was definitely dropped by the Government. The Duke of Marl-

J. Horsburgh, photo. Swan Electric Engraving Co.

Member for Woodstock.

borough does not seem to have been very stern in his rebukes on this occasion, and no doubt a large and influential section of the Conservative party secretly rejoiced at the fate of the Bill. 'I do not think,' wrote Lord Randolph to his father, 'the Government is at all ill-disposed towards me for my speech against them. I have found them lately singularly civil. Nobody regrets the Bill, except Sclater-Booth, who is unapproachable on the subject.' Thus for the first time the House of Commons had learned that this silent youth could bite. 1879 Æt. 30

For the rest of the Parliament Lord Randolph was mute. Scarcely a mention of his name occurs in the 'Debates.' He was absent from many important divisions. His relations and feelings towards the Government seem somewhat to have improved as the Russian war crisis receded, and he remained an impassive spectator of their doings in Afghanistan, in Zululand, and the Transvaal. Meanwhile the reader may be reminded of the swift passage of time and of the considerable period which this account has already covered.

To his Mother.

Ireland: April 15, 1879.

I write to wish you very many happy returns of your birthday to-morrow, which is also, as perhaps you may remember, our wedding-day; and having been married five years I begin to feel highly respectable.

This weather is certainly very wintry and does not seem to lend itself to anything congenial, while anything more odious or unfortunate for fishing cannot be well imagined. I fished for two days in the Suir and never moved a fish,

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nor did anyone else. However, I have added another Irish county (Tipperary) to my peregrinations in this island.

This is now the fifth birthday you have spent in Ireland, and I am sure it must be satisfactory to you to look back on the years you have spent there. I do not think you can recollect a *contretemps* or a cross; and I am sure, if I may say so, no one deserves a pleasanter retrospect: and believe me, I sincerely hope next 15th of April will find you as happy and untroubled as I hope you will be to-morrow.

The wet summer of 1879 produced something like a 'food and fuel famine' in the South and West of Ireland. The potatoes failed, grain would not ripen, and the turf could not be dried. The Government met the danger by offering the landlords loans on easier terms than those recognised by law, and cautioned the Irish Poor Law authorities to be ready to administer additional relief. But official aid was wholly insufficient without private charity and in these straits the Duchess of Marlborough came forward and appealed to the public. She was a woman of exceptional capacity, energy, and decision, and she laboured earnestly and ceaselessly to collect and administer a great fund. Its purposes were to supply food, fuel, and clothing, especially for the aged and weak; to provide small sums to keep the families of able-bodied men in temporary distress out of the workhouse; and thirdly, while carefully guarding against any kind of proselytism, to give grants to schools, so as to secure free meals of bread and potatoes and, if possible, a little clothing for the children attending them. The plan unfolded in her letters to the *Times* was welcomed not only by the Irish

Conservative press, but by the *Freeman's Journal*, which then supported Mr. Butt's policy and which bore handsome testimony to the efforts made by the Viceregal family to become acquainted with the Irish people, and to their great popularity even in the disturbed district near Portarlington, which was their country seat. The ultra-Nationalist papers were less kindly, but the fund was warmly supported and grew apace. The Queen sent 500*l.* and the Prince of Wales 250*l.* By the end of the year 8,300*l.* had been subscribed; by March the receipts were 88,000*l.*; and before the Viceroy left Ireland (April 21) on the change of Ministry the fund was 117,000*l.* Although many subscriptions were diverted to a separate fund raised by the Lord Mayor of Dublin, the Duchess of Marlborough's fund ultimately reached 135,000*l.* Its administration was entirely free from sectarian or party influence, Roman Catholics and Protestants being equally represented on the Committee. Upwards of 80,000*l.* was distributed in relief to the local committees, 37,000*l.* expended in seed, and 10,000*l.* upon clothing. The working expenses were under 1,700*l.* In all this Lord Randolph bore an active part. His whole time was given up to the work of organisation and distribution and before he left Ireland in the spring of 1880 he had visited nearly every Irish county and had come into intimate contact with every class in Irish life. His knowledge of Ireland was soon to be of service to him.

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The Government of Lord Beaconsfield approached the election of 1880 with some inward misgivings.

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Their party was united and contented. The *Times* declared that Mr. Gladstone's language was extravagant and out of proportion to any feeling that might exist in the country. The by-elections were not especially unfavourable to Ministers. But nevertheless there were causes for anxiety. The lustre had gradually faded from the 'spirited foreign policy' and from the Imperialism of Lord Beaconsfield and Lord Lytton. Taxation had been increased; deficits had taken the place of surpluses; no legislative achievements could be discovered. In India and South Africa useless bloodshed, clotted by disaster, seemed to be the outcome of British activities. The policy of the Government in the Near East was stridently asserted by its opponents to be a failure, if not a fraud. Trade depression, as a reaction from the 'boom' after the Franco-German war, was continuous. Revival was delayed by the uncertainty of the European situation. Economic weakness followed diplomatic strength and military exertion. There had been serious strikes in 1878, and the winter of 1878–9 was marked by acute distress. The elements of Nature were adverse. Agriculture was vexed with wet summers and bad harvests and low prices. All Ireland was dark with gathering storm. There was, no doubt, sufficient reason for apprehension; but no one foresaw the extent of impending defeat.

'Lord Beaconsfield,' wrote Lord Randolph Churchill in 1883,[1] 'was very old and very worn when he got to the top of the tree, and he was

[1] 'Elijah's Mantle,' *Fortnightly Review*, May, 1883.

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but indifferently served by some of his colleagues. Advancing years, an enfeebled constitution, a singularly exhausting and painful form of disease, had compelled him to give way to a disposition naturally indolent and unsuited to the constant mastery of dry administrative detail. He must often have thought that he had done nearly enough; that he might with justice allow himself to seek in the distractions of London society a pleasure and a repose to which, during most of his life, he had been a stranger. Only the most captious mind could blame him for this; but this it was, nevertheless, which greatly conduced to the downfall of his Government. What time he gave to public affairs was absorbed in studying, with the assistance of the Foreign Secretary, the various phases of the Eastern complication. All else was neglected. Finance was left entirely to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, in whose unaided hands deficits and floating debts grew apace. The other heads of departments were all allowed to go their own way, doing what seemed good in their eyes. There was no master mind pervading and controlling every branch of the Administration. Election affairs and organisation went to the dogs. The care, the experience, the personal supervision which Mr. Disraeli, assisted by a few practised hands, had bestowed upon the preparations for the General Election of 1874 disappeared. A weak but wide-spreading centralisation enervated the vigour of the provincial organisation. A stupefying degree of over-confidence, a foolish contempt for the

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adversary, a fatally erroneous estimate of the revived influence of Mr. Gladstone — these causes, and these alone, all of them preventible, slowly but surely worked the ruin.

On March 8, 1880, Sir Stafford Northcote announced to the House of Commons its approaching dissolution. The next morning there appeared in the papers Lord Beaconsfield's letter to the Duke of Marlborough, assigning to Ireland the foremost place among the perils and embarrassments of British dominion. The memorable and prophetic words of this celebrated document, familiar though they be, require to be recorded here: —

'Nevertheless, a danger, in its ultimate results scarcely less disastrous than pestilence and famine, and which now engages your Excellency's anxious attention, distracts that country. A portion of its population is attempting to sever the constitutional tie which unites it to Great Britain in that bond which has favoured the power and prosperity of both. It is to be hoped that all men of light and leading will resist this destructive doctrine. The strength of this nation depends on the unity of feeling which should pervade the United Kingdom and its widespread Dependencies. The first duty of an English Minister should be to consolidate that co-operation which renders irresistible a community educated, as our own, in an equal love of liberty and law.

'And yet there are some who challenge the expediency of the Imperial character of this realm.

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Having attempted, and failed, to enfeeble our Colonies by their policy of decomposition, they may perhaps now recognise in the disintegration of the United Kingdom a mode which will not only accomplish, but precipitate, their purpose.

'The immediate dissolution of Parliament will afford an opportunity to the nation to decide upon a course which will materially influence its future fortunes and shape its destiny.'

Members of Parliament were forthwith scattered to defend their seats and above the tumult and babel which arose from so many contests little was heard except the reverberating thunders of Midlothian. Lord Randolph hurried back to Woodstock and arrived, as we may judge from the account he gave his mother, none too soon. The Blenheim estates had suffered from the absence of their owner and those dependent upon them felt acutely the diversion to Ireland and Irish purposes of that personal sympathy and care without which the administration of landed property becomes so often at once wasteful and harsh.

Lord Randolph Churchill to his Mother.

Blenheim: March 21, 1880.

I have to thank you very much for your many letters, which have been so welcome to me. I have now been round the constituency and seen everybody, except a few people in Woodstock whom I have not yet seen, and a few in other parts who were not at home when I called. I shall take them all up this week, but the work will be easier now, and I shall have some time for writing to you.

I assure you it has been hard work, and I have not

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spared time or trouble; every day this last week I was out by nine and not home till eleven at night. The results of the canvass will be arrived at to-morrow when the Chairmen of the various Committees hand in their reports, but I have no doubt the result will be satisfactory to you. Every day, however, confirms what I wrote last week; the continual expression of the labourer in Stonesfield, Coombe, Handborough, and Bladon is, 'Yes, I voted for you last time, but I have been very badly served since,' and then follows half an hour's complaint. The other Party admit that they would never have tried again, had it not been for these complaints of the labouring men and the great scarcity of employment.

I know well how difficult, almost impossible, it is to please poor people. Nor do I blame your agent for not doing all they ask or for not finding employment for them; that no doubt was out of his power. What I do blame him for, and what I am sure my father and you will blame him for, is for having provoked against himself a great deal of ill-will, and having treated these poor people, and farmers, with rudeness and worse than rudeness, and this, too, during your absence, and at a time when the greatest discretion and temper were wanted for the management of a great estate.

You cannot think how people are looking forward to your return here; they feel quite jealous of all you are doing and have done in Ireland. You have made for yourself a great name among the Radical working men, several of them have spoken to me about you. Several of them who perhaps would have gone for Hall will vote for me, or rather for you; but at the same time I feel as I never felt before how greatly this place and all the neighbourhood depends upon your care and my father's attention.

I have a public meeting, probably the last, to-morrow night in Kidlington. The election will be on April 2, but much work is needed for the proper preparation and organisation for polling day, so that the Liberals may this time get their 'quietus.'

I hope you liked my speech at Woodstock. I was

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prepared for a row, but though I had no one with me to help, and although the other Party was there in great force, helped by a preacher and stump orator, they heard me with the greatest patience for forty minutes. The preacher asked some questions and made some remarks, but I am told that what I said on the Foreign Policy and Home Questions pleased them much, and that I was considered to have had the best of the preacher.

I feel so sorry for all this expense coming on at such a time, but I hope things are going to mend this year. The weather has been perfect — fine, bright, cold days, worth pounds to the farmers, who are cleaning their fields with great activity and advantage. A good harvest this year will do much to set things going; but the serious part of the matter is that the farmers are so much worse off in point of capital, and in addition the land is four years to the bad, suffering from weeds and reduced manure. I fear that even with good harvests the future is full of difficulties to the landlords.

The outlook here at the outset was very alarming, but it is clearing rapidly. I think I must attend more regularly this session. Hall hit me rather hard on account of my slack attendance. I think the Party will keep a fair majority, but they cannot expect to have quite so many as they had nor do I think it would be a good thing. I am afraid you will think I have become rather Jingo, but any lukewarmness at such a moment would be most dangerous.

The election at Woodstock took place on the second day of the polling (April 1), and Lord Randolph Churchill was returned — in a total electorate of 1,060 — by 512 votes to the Liberal candidate's (Mr. W. Hall, of Lancing, Sussex) 452. Thus Woodstock was snatched from the burning; but throughout the kingdom general disaster overwhelmed the Conservatives. In the first four days the Conservative majority had been destroyed by

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their losses in the boroughs. The counties endorsed and even emphasised the decision. When the returns were complete, Mr. Gladstone had obtained a Liberal majority of 54 over all other sections in the House. The dissolved Parliament had numbered 351 Conservatives, 250 Liberals, and 51 Home Rulers. The new Parliament assembled with 353 Liberals, 237 Conservatives, and 62 Home Rulers.

In two chapters two-thirds of Lord Randolph's life have been described. Starting with many advantages, he was still at thirty-one obscure. Four or five speeches in as many years had made no particular impression, and the House of Commons had scarcely formed an opinion about him. Stirred on the one hand by liberal and pacific sentiments and restrained on the other by affection for the Conservative party, to which he was bound by so many ties of friendship and tradition and above all by respect for his father, he was prevented during those years from taking any clear or decided action which might have enlisted sympathy or commanded attention. Out-of-doors among the people he was unknown. Adverse social influences denied the recognition of such ability as he had shown. His party was now humbled in the dust. His own family borough lay under the shadow of an approaching Reform Bill. New Ministers and new measures occupied the public mind. Grave and violent dangers beset the State and no one troubled to think about an undistinguished sprig of the nobility. Nevertheless his hour had come.

CHAPTER III

THE FOURTH PARTY

His birth, it seems, by Merlin's calculation,
Was under Venus, Mercury, and Mars;
His mind with all their attributes was mixt;
And, like those planets, wandering and unfixt. . . .
His schemes of war were sudden, unforeseen,
Inexplicable both to friend and foe;
It seemed as if some momentary spleen
Inspired the project and impelled the blow.

HOOKHAM FRERE, *The Monks and the Giants.*

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GREAT expectations were entertained of the Parliament of 1880 by the Liberal members who assembled at Westminster after the election. Indeed, the position of their party was one of immense strength and advantage. The Government enjoyed the support of a majority in the House of Commons who outnumbered the Conservatives and the Irish combined by more than 50 votes and amounted for practical purposes to between 100 and 130. In the House of Lords they could count upon the wealth and talents of the great Whig houses, the influence of the Cavendishes and the Russells, the experience of Lord Granville, and the eloquence of the Duke of Argyll. They were led by the finest Parliamentarian of this or any other age, whose incomparable powers had won him an almost superstitious

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veneration; and around him were gathered a band of men of distinguished ability, well known to the country, practised in public affairs and yielding ready subordination to the genius of their chief. Upon the Treasury Bench were seated statesmen like Mr. Bright, Mr. Forster, and Lord Hartington. Sir Charles Dilke and Mr. Chamberlain represented the growing Radicalism and the future hope of their party. And when the view was extended from the walls of Parliament to the larger arena of the electorate no less powerful resources were displayed. The tendency of the day was strongly progressive. The ability and authority of the Press — whether Metropolitan, provincial, or local — were ranged in overwhelming preponderance upon the Liberal side. Scotland and London, almost all the great cities, nearly every centre of active political thought — Edinburgh, Birmingham, Glasgow, Manchester, Leeds, Bradford, Sheffield, Bristol — sent their representatives in vast majority to uphold the new Administration; and a Reform Bill promised an almost equal advantage in the counties. Many active and vigilant societies and a multitude of political clubs stimulated the energies of the rank and file; and the whole was bound together and directed to a common end by a formidable and opulent organisation.

The position of the Conservative party, upon the other hand, was weak and miserable in the extreme. The sympathies and the intellect of the nation were estranged. Lord Beaconsfield, the only man who could touch the imagination of the people, was with-

drawn from the popular assembly. Many of the Tory strongholds — family boroughs and the like — were threatened by approaching Redistribution. The Front Opposition Bench, cumbered with the ancient and dreary wreckage of the late Administration, was utterly unequal to the Government in eloquence or authority. The attendance of Conservative members, as in all dispirited Oppositions, was slack and fitful. 1880 Æt. 31

Outmatched in debate, outnumbered in division, the party was pervaded by a profound feeling of gloom. They had nothing to give to their followers, nothing to promise to the people: no Garters for Dukes, no peerages for wealth, no baronetcies or knighthoods or trinkets for stalwarts. Although the new spirit created by Disraeli — *Imperium* abroad, *Libertas* at home — still lived in the Tory party, it had been profoundly discouraged by the results of the election; and many of those who swayed Conservative counsels could think of no plan of action except an obstinate but apathetic resistance to change. Jeered at as 'the stupid party,' haunted by profound distrust of an ever-growing democracy, conscious that the march of ideas was leaving them behind, these desponding counsellors could discern in the future no sign of returning fortune and seemed to find the sole function of the Conservative minority in delaying and restricting the movements of the age by means of electoral inequalities, by Parliamentary procedure, and through the prejudices of interest and of class.

What political prophet or philosopher, surveying

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the triumphant Liberal array, would have predicted that this Parliament, from which so much was hoped, would be indeed the most disastrous and even fatal period in their party history? Or who could have foreseen that these dejected Conservatives in scarcely five years, with the growing assent of an immense electorate, would advance to the enjoyment of twenty years of power? It needed a penetrating eye to discover the method, and a bold heart first to stem and finally to turn the tide. Who would have thought of breaking up the solid phalanx of Liberalism by driving in a wedge between the Radicals and the Whigs; or dreamt of using the Irish to overthrow the great apostle of reconciliation between peoples; and who without the audacity of genius would have dared to force the Conservative party to base the foundations of their authority with confidence upon the very masses they dreaded and to teach those masses to venerate and guard the institutions they had formerly despised?

The Liberal majority, who had arrived at Westminster in such excellent spirits after their victory at the polls, were enabled quite early in the session to take part in a Government defeat. The electors of Northampton, which was in those days reputed the most Radical town in England, had returned Mr. Bradlaugh as one of their representatives. Charles Bradlaugh came to the House of Commons by strange paths of thought and action. Forty-seven years before he had been born in a religious family, the son of a very poor solicitor's clerk. For a time he was a

teacher in an Evangelical Sunday-school; but he began to ask many questions about his faith and its foundations, which appear to have been indifferently answered by a clergyman to whom he applied. Later he was a Chartist, and spoke often at open-air meetings, at first on the Christian side; but after a public disputation with an anti-Christian opponent be became a declared atheist and found shelter for a while in an anti-Christian family. Harassed by poverty he enlisted in the East India Company's army, was exchanged into the British Service, served with credit several years in the 7th Dragoon Guards, and bought his discharge with a legacy that had come to him from an aunt. Next he was an office-boy to a solicitor, whence he rose soon to manage the common law department of the firm. These harsh and varied experiences had inflamed his mind against many established institutions, human and divine. As a bold and effective platform speaker, or under the pseudonym of 'Iconoclast,' he was accustomed to set forth what occurred to him against Christianity, the Bible, and the House of Brunswick, to the severe displeasure of the more prosperous or more contented classes in the nation. In the year 1877 he intruded upon still more dangerous ground and made himself responsible for the republication of a pamphlet about over-population, its evils and its remedies and other Malthusian topics, which, being among the most tremendous of natural problems, have long been judged unfit for public discussion. The pamphlet is said to have attained a sale of

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180,000 copies, and the publisher was sentenced to six months' imprisonment, from which he only escaped through the timely discovery of some legal flaw. Mr. Bradlaugh's struggles against authority, penury, and obloquy were now to be transferred to a more brightly-lighted stage.

On May 3, 1880, Charles Bradlaugh presented himself at the table of the House of Commons and claimed to affirm instead of taking the oath. The Speaker, whom he had acquainted with his intention some days earlier, decided on his own responsibility to leave the question to the decision of the House, and Lord Frederick Cavendish, representing the Government in the absence of Ministers — whose seats had been vacated by taking office — moved accordingly for a Select Committee of Inquiry. Sir Stafford Northcote, the Leader of the Opposition, being as it appears personally willing to substitute an affirmation for the oath, seconded the motion. When the House met again (May 5) Sir Henry Wolff gave notice that he would oppose the reference to a committee; and when it was nominated he moved (May 11) 'the previous question,' on the ground that to proceed to general business before the Queen's Speech had announced to members the reasons for which Parliament was summoned would be to invade the Royal Prerogative. He was supported by Mr. Gorst, the member for Chatham. A debate ensued, in the course of which some prominent Conservatives deprecated Sir Henry Wolff's motion, and several of the Conservative leaders

abstained from the division in which it was defeated by 171 to 74. But the question had already begun to excite attention. The delay was fatal to its settlement. If Mr. Bradlaugh had been content to take the oath unostentatiously among a crowd of members at the beginning of the session, it is almost certain that no question would have been raised. He chose instead in the most public manner to cast down a challenge. It was eagerly accepted. From the caprice that prompted one private member to stir a smouldering fire and the chance interposition of another who happened to observe him arose a protracted and ferocious controversy, which, in Mr. Morley's words, 'went on as long as the Parliament, clouded the radiance of the party triumph, threw the new Government at once into a minority and dimmed the ascendency of the great Minister.' 1880 Æt. 31

By a majority of one the committee decided against Mr. Bradlaugh's claim to affirm. He thereupon wrote to the newspapers that he considered it his duty to accept the mandate of his constituents and that if to do so he had to submit to a form less solemn than the affirmation, so much the worse for those who forced him to repeat words which were to him sounds conveying no clear and definite meaning. Having by this, as he no doubt supposed, settled the matter to the extreme discomfiture of his opponents, he repaired to the House on May 21 — the third day of its meeting for regular business — resolved to take the oath in the usual form. But in the meantime Sir Henry Wolff had not been idle. With the assistance

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of Mr. Grantham — now one of His Majesty's Judges — he had studied the legal aspect of the question and had drafted a resolution. He had consulted with his friends and in particular with the young member for Woodstock, with whom he had struck up a friendly acquaintance in the last Parliament and of whose talents he had formed a high opinion. Mr. Bradlaugh's letter had, moreover, produced an astonishing effect. The House — almost irrespective of party — was profoundly offended and even outraged by his words and by the action he intended. Anger flamed in the Lobbies. Ministers were justly apprehensive of the difficulties that might arise if the question of Mr. Bradlaugh's right to take the oath was held to be one for the determination of the House. They held a council in the Speaker's Library, and proposed to meet the hostile motion, which was now certain when Mr. Bradlaugh should present himself, by moving 'the previous question.' But the Whips reported that the feeling in the House was 'uncontrollable.' The Liberal majority could not be relied on to support 'the previous question' and the Prime Minister was forced to content himself with proposing a new committee to search for precedents.

When the hour came, Mr. Bradlaugh advanced to the table to take the oath. Thereupon Sir Henry Wolff sprang up and objected to its being administered to him. Mr. Dillwyn, a Liberal member, intervened, submitting that it was out of order to question the right of any member to take the oath; but the

Speaker, adhering to the intention he had expressed in private, ruled — although in very doubting language — in favour of Sir Henry Wolff. The Speaker directed the member for Northampton to withdraw while Sir Henry Wolff explained his reasons. These were, in short, that Mr. Bradlaugh's declared opinions upon religion and Royalty necessarily rendered any oath of allegiance that he might take meaningless in form and valueless in fact. 1880 Æt. 31

The Prime Minister made an effort to narrow the issue to the simple judicial question of whether a duly elected member could be prevented by the House from fulfilling his statutory obligations and he proposed his Select Committee. The debate which followed was long, serious, and savage. Two views, both held with intensity, prevailed about the man: first, that he was a blatant contumacious atheist who made a living by blasphemy, republicanism, and indecent literature, and sought in Parliamentary honours a fresh advertisement for his hateful trade; and, secondly, that he was a martyr gone wrong, whose zeal and convictions — honest, albeit pernicious — had caused him to suffer in private prospects and public life. The unfavourable view predominated in the House and was adopted with vehemence by the Conservative party. There was a third view — that the House of Commons was no judge of such matters, that it had received no evidence but common report, and even so had no business to exclude members because of their opinions. But such arguments, although urged by orators like Mr. Gladstone and

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Mr. Bright, found little acceptance. Extracts were read from 'The Impeachment of the House of Brunswick' and 'The Fruits of Philosophy.' Mr. Bradlaugh's declaration that an oath was to him an idle and meaningless ceremony was repeated over and over again. Was the House to connive at an act of blasphemy? Mr. Gibson from the Front Opposition Bench, taking the Bible in his hands from the table on which it lay, read out impressively the solemn words which were to be mockingly invoked. Mr. F. H. O'Donnell, a militant Irish Catholic, spoke in unmeasured abhorrence of the Bradlaugh doctrines, which he said would degrade human love and human wedlock to something lower than union of beast with beast. The speech of Mr. Walter of the *Times*, which, although favouring the appointment of a Select Committee, declared that Mr. Bradlaugh could not be permitted to go through the form of taking the oath, was regarded as representing an important element of moderate Liberal opinion.

Partisanship was not slow to perceive its opportunity. Sir Stafford Northcote and the whole Conservative party made haste to support Sir Henry Wolff. Opposition speakers sought to identify the Liberal party and Mr. Gladstone himself with the member for Northampton. He had been their candidate, he was now their comrade. The division, according to one gentleman, would be between those who were on the side of atheism, disloyalty, and immorality and those who were not. Amid such fury many very wise and worthy exhortations to preserve a judicial spirit were

overwhelmed. Lord Randolph Churchill resumed the debate on May 24. For the first time he addressed a crowded House and was supported by the cheers of a great party. There was in his character a strong element of religious feeling. He spoke with a kind of half-restrained passion which commanded attention. He opposed the appointment of a committee. The matter was simple. Let it be decided by what Lord Beaconsfield had called 'the unerring instinct of the House of Commons.' Like others who had spoken, he quoted from the Bradlaugh writings. He stood at the corner seat of the third bench below the gangway and when he had finished reading the extract beginning 'I loathe these small German breast-bestarred wanderers,' he cast 'The Impeachment of the House of Brunswick' upon the floor and stamped upon it, to the surprise of the assembly. Although this was his first entry into the dispute, he seems at once to have been accepted as a principal. Henceforward, upon the Bradlaugh question, he took his natural place as a leader and before two years had passed he was credited by the public with having begun the whole controversy. 1880 Æt. 31

Sir Henry Wolff's motion was rejected in favour of the Ministerial amendment proposing a committee by 214–289. There was another dispute on May 28 over the names of the committee, Lord Randolph being ironically or mischievously anxious that Nonconformists should be more numerous on it. Mr. Gladstone, in reply, concerned himself almost entirely with the arguments of Lord Randolph and Sir

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Henry Wolff. The committee was appointed. Its search for precedents was barren. It reported that Mr. Bradlaugh could not take the oath, but recommended that he should be allowed to affirm at his own risk, in order that the matter might be settled in the Courts. The Government accepted the view of the committee. On June 21, therefore, Mr. Labouchere moved that his colleague be permitted to affirm. Sir Hardinge Giffard, in the name of the Conservative party, met this by an amendment which declared that Mr. Bradlaugh should not be permitted either to affirm or swear. After two days' debate (June 21 and 22) the first great division of the new Parliament was taken. Mr. Labouchere's motion, although supported by the whole Ministry, was rejected by 275 votes to 230 and Sir Hardinge Giffard's amendment was adopted in its stead. In the clamorous excitement which followed the declaration of the numbers some have discovered the joy of the Tory party at their first revenge for Midlothian.

The account of this episode need not be pursued in detail. How Mr. Bradlaugh presented himself the next day and claimed to swear; how the Prime Minister, his solution having been rejected, refused his guidance to the House; how the Speaker called upon Mr. Bradlaugh to withdraw; how he resisted; how he was heard at the Bar; how he was expelled; how he was committed to the Clock Tower upon the motion of the Leader of the Opposition; how action was taken against him in the Courts for

sitting and voting without statutory qualification, are upon record. How he was unseated and re-elected, and in what manner he finally took the oath, must presently be described. The Bradlaugh case was inexhaustible in scenes and sensations. It recurred almost month after month throughout the Parliament, and whenever it occupied the stage the Government was powerless; the leadership of the House was abandoned by its first and greatest member; the overwhelming majority of the Midlothian campaign became divided and untrustworthy. The credit of the Ministry was injured in Parliament and in the country the Liberal party and its leaders were, not unsuccessfully, represented as the champions of Bradlaugh and his abominated doctrines.

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The Fourth Party grew out of the Bradlaugh incident. To Wolff belonged the merit of discovery. The others in coming to his aid had learned the value of co-operation. They had seized an opportunity while regular leaders hesitated. They had helped each other to use it with determination. The whole party had in the end been glad to follow their lead and great and admitted advantage had ensued. They resolved forthwith to make permanent that comradeship which had proved so happy on occasion. Three of them already sat on the Front Bench below the gangway, and during the early days of the session Lord Randolph abandoned his perch on the back benches and came forward to sit with them. An old and respected member of the Conservative party had been accustomed to sit in the

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corner seat. In a few weeks he departed to serener quarters, saying to Sir Henry Wolff, 'This is getting too hot for me'; and Lord Randolph thenceforward was regarded as the rightful owner of that coveted place. The compact which bound the 'Fourth Party,' as they were soon called by general consent, was simple and elastic. No questions of policy or leadership arose. Each was free to act in perfect independence; but it was agreed that, whenever one of them was attacked, the others should defend him. Upon these conditions was created a Parliamentary group which proved, in proportion to its numbers, the most formidable and effective force for the purposes of Opposition in the history of the House of Commons.

The four men who had thus come together were, each in his own way, remarkable. The first mention of Sir Henry Wolff in Lord Randolph's letters occurs in 1879. 'I am dining to-night at the Garrick with Sir Henry Wolff and a large party of M.P.'s.' Then again, a few months later, 'Wolff and I are going to London together in order that the questions of the leadership of the party may be complicated by our presence.' When the Parliament of 1880 assembled they seem to have become already fairly intimate friends. Sir Henry Wolff, the son of a distinguished traveller and scholar whose name in the early 'forties was respected in many countries outside his own, had entered Parliament as member for Christchurch in 1874, and had already, by his knowledge of foreign affairs

and diplomatic methods, gained a reputation in the House of Commons. He was now member for Portsmouth. He was fifteen years older than Lord Randolph and possessed a large and varied fund of experience and information. Shrewd, suave, witty, and imperturbable, versed in Parliamentary procedure, fertile in schemes, clever at managing people, a master of smoothly-turned sentences and plausible debating points, a ready speaker, an industrious politician, old enough to compel respectful treatment from the House, young enough to love fighting and manœuvres for their own sake, Sir Henry Wolff was, at the beginning of 1880, just the kind of man to make a Ministry uncomfortable. If he contributed notably to the strength of the Fourth Party in public, he added still more to the gaiety of its secret councils. He rallied generously to the chaff in which Lord Randolph always delighted, and the comradeship which grew between them was abiding. No cloud darkened, no conflict of interests or opinions disturbed it. Of the intimate relations between these four allies, the friendship of Lord Randolph and Sir Henry Wolff was the only one to survive unimpaired the vicissitudes of political life.

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Mr. Gorst possessed temper and talents of a different kind. His mood was serious, his ability distinguished, his industry enormous. His career in the past had been more noteworthy than that of any of his companions. He was a rapidly rising lawyer. He had sat in Parliament as early as

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1866. He had been entrusted with the reorganisation of the Conservative party machinery after the defeat of 1868, and Mr. Disraeli always regarded the victory of 1874 as largely due to his arrangements, and treated him with special favour and confidence. He probably knew more about politics, public and secret, than all his three colleagues together, and his knowledge of law proved on repeated occasions of inestimable value to the rest. In conjunction with Lord Randolph Churchill his abilities became doubly effective. A few years later Sir Henry James publicly complained, in a Standing Committee, of such an alliance. It was, he said, a poacher's combination — a pointer to find game and a greyhound to run it down.

The career of the remaining member of the Fourth Party is not yet complete. Mr. Arthur Balfour in 1880 was an affable and rather idle young gentleman, who had delicately toyed with philosophy and diplomacy, was earnest in the cause of popular concerts, and brought to the House of Commons something of Lord Melbourne's air of languid and well-bred indifference. How he came at all to be drawn into that circle of fierce energy which radiated from Lord Randolph Churchill was a puzzle to those who knew him best. In the early days of the Fourth Party no one — certainly not his comrades — regarded him as a serious politician. Lord Randolph, who delighted in nicknames, used to call him 'Postlethwaite,' and made him the object of much harmless and friendly chaff. In private life he already exercised that personal

charm and fascination which in later years were curiously to deflect the course of great events. But he seemed so lacking in energy, so entirely devoid of anything like ambition, so slenderly and uncertainly attached to politics at all, that his friends feared he would withdraw altogether, and none recognised or imagined in this amiable, easy-going member for a family borough the calculating, tenacious, and unwearying Minister who was destined through so many years to control the House of Commons and shape the policy of the State. 1880 Æt. 31

The Employers' Liability Bill afforded the new confederacy a wide and fertile field for their exertions. The law, as it had been formed by judicial decisions, was, according to modern ideas, strangely harsh upon the workman. The employer was liable for any injury done to third parties by the negligence of his servants but not for injuries done by one servant to another. If, for instance, there occurred at his mills an explosion which killed and wounded both outsiders and his own workmen, the employer might be sued for damages in respect of person or property by the outsiders or their representatives, but injured fellow-workmen had no legal claim because they were in what was called 'common employment.' Complaint against this anomaly had been loud and long. Two extreme remedies were proposed by the respective interests. On the one hand, the employers desired to be free from all liability for injuries done, except by themselves personally; on the other, the workmen demanded the abolition of the doctrine of 'common

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employment' and an assertion of the consequent liability of the employer to all alike. A Bill had been introduced in the preceding Parliament by Mr. Brassey, a private member, which proposed a middle course. It sought to extend the liability of the employer by nullifying the plea of 'common employment' whenever the injury was caused by a defect in the machinery, by the negligence of an authorised superintendent, or as the result of obedience to the employer's rules or bye-laws. When the new Ministers assumed office the session was already advanced; and under a hasty necessity for providing a certain legislative pabulum for the activities of Parliament, the Government adopted, with very scanty examination, Mr. Brassey's Bill. The complications in which this plan involved them were numerous. It had not originated in the great departments of the State and was, both in principle and drafting, an amateurish suggestion which might, indeed, sound very plausible and accommodating; but which had not been clearly thought out in a scientific spirit with the advantages of official information. No division was taken upon the second reading; but the debate aroused the Ministers in charge of the measure to the consciousness that they were committed to a confused and ill-considered proposal. It was necessary to move that the Bill should be re-committed, and before it re-appeared it was almost entirely rewritten. Its general character as a compromise was, however, preserved.

The Fourth Party held deep council as to their

policy upon this measure. They saw that a Bill had practically been thrown to the House to be moulded into shape by debate. They resolved to address themselves conscientiously to the task of perfecting the crude conceptions of the Government. But they resolved further the direction in which their influence should be exerted. The manufacturers and capitalists, who in those days were numerous and influential in the Liberal party, were already greatly perturbed at the extent to which their liability was to be increased, and the Government was constrained to listen to their grumbles. Sitting immediately behind Ministers, Sir Henry Mather Jackson groaned forth his anxieties. Not so the Fourth Party. They approached the question with open minds, as independent persons who desired only to do right between man and man and cared nothing for the sordid interests involved. Whereas Ministers had expected that Tory opposition would naturally take the form of a defence of the employers' position, the Fourth Party proceeded to criticise the measure entirely in the interests of the working class. This secured them two advantages, which it may be presumed they desired equally. First, it was in accordance with the spirit of Lord Beaconsfield's progressive Toryism and would really benefit the labouring people, for whose sake the Bill was designed. Secondly, nothing could be more embarrassing to a Liberal Government than Conservative opposition on the grounds that the Bill did not go far enough. 'Be thorough,' exclaimed these Tories to the Government.

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'Fulfil your election pledges. If you intend to deal with industrial questions let it be in an honest and courageous spirit.' The Government was gravely disconcerted. They found themselves between two fires. Below the gangway the Radicals stirred uneasily at such unanswerable argument; and behind the Treasury Bench the wealthiest supporters of the party were gnashing their teeth at such reckless proposals.

Whenever the subject came before the House the four friends were in their places. There was not a single sitting from which they were absent, or a single clause which they did not amend, or seek to amend. It is, moreover, true that many important alterations in the scope and detail of the measure were conceded to their insistence and that many of their proposals, though rejected by the Government of 1880, have now become the law of the land. The unforeseen complexity of the measure afforded an indefinite scope to their ingenious minds. All sorts of hard cases were propounded, to which the Government could find no satisfactory reply. An employer was to be liable for accidents which occurred through his defective plant or stock. Did this include animate as well as inanimate things? The Ministers in charge had not made up their minds. They had contemplated in the word 'stock' a stack of timber or bricks which might fall and cause injury through negligent stacking. They were now invited to consider the case of live-stock. Lord Randolph said that a farmer might have a horse which he knew

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perfectly well had a disease of the foot and was liable to come down at any moment. Would the workman riding home from plough and injured by the fall be secured compensation under the Bill? 'No,' replied the law officers, 'for the disease of the foot would not be due to the negligence of the employer.' 'But suppose,' asked Mr. Balfour, 'the employer had thrown down the horse and broken his knees, and that on a subsequent occasion, in consequence of the horse having been thrown down by his carelessness, his servant was thrown and broke his arm, what then?' And it then appeared there might be liability.

And what was a defect in 'stock'? The bricks of timber might be stacked so as to cause injury and yet be themselves most excellent materials. The defect was not in them but in the person who stacked them. Someone recollected that the rays of the sun had ignited lucifer matches lying in a shop window, which in turn set fire to gunpowder and produced a serious explosion. Where was the defect? If anywhere, it was in the glass which had concentrated the rays of the sun. Amid such questionings and the utter confusion to which they led, Mr. Dodson and his friends passed many uncomfortable hours. Lord Randolph and Mr. Gorst were very profuse in regrets for the slow progress of the Bill. But when the Government themselves did not understand their own measure it was necessary to be very careful indeed — and, after all, there was plenty of time; better sit till November than scamp public duties and pass slovenly or unworkable legislation.

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Another dilemma was supplied by the case of domestic servants. Mr. Balfour and Lord Randolph together protested against their exclusion from the benefits of the Act — 'merely because they had no votes.' 'What is the special characteristic of footmen or chambermaids,' asked the latter, 'which disentitles them to compensation?' No answer could be discovered except that the risks of such persons were not great. Lord Randolph suggested the case of the man who worked both in the house and in the stable: injured in the house, he received no compensation, injured in the stable, it was his right. How could it be contended that domestic servants ran no risks? 'Suppose,' inquired the member for Woodstock, in a speech which caused keen irritation to the Ministers and almost equal amusement to the House, 'an explosion of gas. An employer comes home late at night. He does not, perhaps, altogether know what he is doing. He blows out the gas. An explosion results, and the servant is seriously injured; ought he not to receive compensation?' 'And what of lifts?' chimed in Mr. Gorst. There were lifts in hotels as well as in factories. Suppose through some defect in the machinery of the lift a servant at a hotel was injured, why was his claim to compensation less good than that of the workman injured through a similar defect in a similar lift in a factory? To the reproach that zeal for the working classes was a new-found virtue in the Tory party and had not been apparent in the conduct of the late Government, Mr. Balfour replied tartly that the late Government had

not been formed from members below the gangway, and that if it had the claims of the working classes would no doubt have been met.

So through all the sultry days of August the discussion went forward tirelessly. But it should not be supposed that these objections of detail were advanced frivolously with no general purpose behind them. Lord Randolph had, early in the debates, denounced the doctrine of 'common employment'; and on the third reading Mr. Gorst moved the re-committal of the Bill in the name of the Fourth Party, on account of its multifold inequities and anomalies, and urged the recognition of some simple general principle which would equally govern the rights of all classes of outsiders, or workmen or servants, whether in factories, private or Government employ, whether in or out of doors. This conclusion is one which modern legislation has already largely secured and which its progress must ultimately achieve.

As with the Employers' Liability Bill, so with Hares and Rabbits, and so with Burials, though the task of perfecting these two latter measures seems principally to have been discharged by Mr. Balfour and Sir Henry Wolff. At every point the Fourth Party were armed with facts and arguments; on every question they had a plan, in all difficulties they sustained each other. The Government were repeatedly exhorted to spare no labour for the public weal. Legislation of an important character, they were reminded, could not be passed in haste, or without proper intervals for reflection on the part of those

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who were responsible for it. Whenever the Government and their partisans showed signs of impatience — and, judging by the interruptions which are sprinkled in the columns of 'Hansard,' this was not infrequent — a motion, or the threat of a motion, to report progress or to adjourn was found an admirable weapon to employ; while all the time the House as a whole was kept in subjection and often in good-humour, by the excellent quality of the speeches, the wit by which they were adorned, the fertility of resource which distinguished them and the reality of the arguments advanced.

Not content with discharging — however conscientiously — the functions of criticism, the Fourth Party aspired to legislate constructively. With the object of encouraging private thrift and ready-money transactions, Lord Randolph introduced in 1881 a Small Debts Bill which sought to make debts of under one hundred pounds irrecoverable after one year from the date of their being contracted. Sir Henry Wolff carried a measure satirically described by Sir William Harcourt as the 'Bournemouth Reform Bill,' which enabled the inhabitants of seaside resorts to let their houses for short periods without impairing their voting qualification. In every Parliamentary incident, great or small, the four allies were prominent, if not supreme. The question of erecting a monument in Westminster Abbey to the Prince Imperial of France, killed in the Zulu War, produced differences in the Government, and from the division by which the proposal was

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rejected several Ministers abstained by withdrawing to the two small rooms behind the Chair which are used for the minor consultations of colleagues or opponents. Sir Henry Wolff at once raised a debate upon this alleged impropriety and, although Sir Stafford Northcote deprecated his action, a long wrangle followed, from which the Government emerged with ruffled plumes. When Mr. Dodson, the President of the Local Government Board, by an absurd mistake got himself elected for a second constituency without having previously applied for the Chiltern Hundreds, it was Lord Randolph Churchill who drew attention to the irregularity; and as the procedure of the House rendered it difficult to debate the matter without some artful device, he himself moved for a new writ for the borough of Chester, while Mr. Gorst — by collusion, as Mr. Gladstone unwarrantably asserted — gave notice of an amendment which would have brought the discussion within the bounds of order.

Nothing could excel the industry of the Fourth Party in Supply. They presented themselves nightly as the vigilant guardians of the public purse. No item of expenditure was too small to be criticised; no economy too petty to be cherished. 'If,' said Lord Randolph Churchill, with a paternal look at Sir Stafford Northcote and his colleagues, 'the late Tory Government had been more attentive to the principles involved in paltry matters of expenditure, they might still be sitting on the Treasury Bench.' On one warm evening when the bulk of the Conservative

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party was scattered on its holidays — in pursuit of grouse according to tradition, indulging their wives and families at the seaside according to fact — and when the weary Ministerialists gasped amid the parching streets of London, Lord Randolph Churchill subjected to the most minute examination the grants-in-aid accorded to various learned societies. He inquired about the Meteorological Office and canvassed the value of weather reports. He compared the weather forecasts of Greenwich with those of America. Satisfied upon this, he turned to the Academy of Music and raised further important points for the Minister, Lord Frederick Cavendish, to explain. When the diplomatic vote was taken, Mr. Balfour and Sir Henry Wolff were at hand with stores of knowledge and that keen thirst for information which is only to be gained by personal experience. With only seventeen men to go into the Lobby with them, the Fourth Party were formidable and feared. Nothing could provoke them to anger or to levity. Their dignity and politeness were undisturbed by charges of obstruction. They desired only to further public business and to aid the Government in their responsible duties; and they moved to report progress lest ill-temper should result from the natural impatience of weaker and less conscientious legislators. Under these inflictions the Liberal party groaned and its champions grunted.[1]

[1] I have been greatly assisted in this chapter by the excellent accounts of the Fourth Party proceedings contributed by Mr. Harold Gorst to the *Nineteenth Century* from November 1902 to January 1903. In relating some incidents, notably on pages 153 and 161, I have by his permission used his actual words.

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It was inevitable that disagreements should spring up between the official leaders on the Front Opposition Bench and the active group below the gangway. At first, to the amusement of the House and later somewhat to its irritation, the Fourth Party claimed to be totally distinct from and independent of all existing parties. 'There are two great parties in the State,' said a member one night. MR. PARNELL: 'Three.' LORD RANDOLPH CHURCHILL: 'Four.' (Laughter.) Fortified by this assumption, the Fourth Party moved whatever amendments and took whatever course seemed good to them, upon any and every question. As they did not consult their leaders, it often happened that differences arose about their tactics. And when, as we have seen, the influence of these free-lances was so often employed in making Liberal Bills more Radical, it was not surprising that the old Tories and ex-Ministers began to view their busy allies with apprehension.

The leader of the Conservative party in the House of Commons was an old and distinguished man. Sir Stafford Northcote had held high office, first as Secretary of State for India, afterwards as Chancellor of the Exchequer, under Disraeli in 1867 and in 1874. He had led the Commons upon Mr. Disraeli's retirement to the House of Lords. Upon finance he enjoyed a reputation second only to that of Mr. Gladstone. He is said to have possessed the common virtues in special excellence. Although Mr. Gladstone, with that marvellous power great men acquire of looking at things only from their own point of view,

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described him as 'not strong enough to convince his party that they were wrong,' he also spoke of him as admirable in good-temper, self-sacrifice, quickness, sound knowledge, and general integrity. This eulogy was not undeserved at Mr. Gladstone's hands. Sir Stafford Northcote had in ancient Corn Law days, when Peel was the honoured leader of the Conservative party, been private secretary to Mr. Gladstone at the Board of Trade. The reverence in which he held his former chief was undiminished by the passage of years, and his natural amiability of character led him to express it and display it on many suitable and unsuitable occasions. But the virtues of Sir Stafford Northcote were not those most needed in the stormy times amid which he closed his long career.

'His gentle disposition and good intentions,' said Lord Randolph long afterwards, 'would have saved anyone from attack except a leader of Opposition.' The very qualities which endeared him to his friends and family and won him the compliments of his opponents, disheartened, irritated, and paralysed his followers in the House of Commons. The deference which he delighted to show to the Prime Minister, offended a party which had just struggled back, smarting and reduced, from a crushing electoral disaster. His lack of enterprising vigour was from the first session of the new Parliament painfully apparent even to his most faithful friends — and all of those who sat below the gangway were not his friends. His speeches were tame

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and ineffective. When party rancour festered to hate, when crisis at home followed hot on crisis abroad, the mild expostulations with which Sir Stafford was accustomed to conclude the debates, disappointed his followers. The Opposition, always hopelessly outmatched in their official spokesman, were never more plainly at a disadvantage than when their leader undertook to encounter Mr. Gladstone. Sir Stafford Northcote's character was estimable, his talents were distinguished, his experience had been long; but scarcely any Parliamentary chief has been more unequal to the particular work he had to do. And yet though his strength failed year by year and extraordinary physical disabilities oppressed him with increasing severity, his fingers, nerveless for aught else, closed tenaciously upon the reins of power. Unfit for any serious exertion or important business even in private life, he was willing — not, indeed, from any selfish or sordid motive, but from a high sense of public duty — to fill the most arduous offices of State. In a condition when, as a doctor, lawyer, or business man, he would have been unable properly to discharge his duties, he was prepared to form Governments, to grapple with Mr. Gladstone at the head of a great majority, and to guide the Conservative party through the fiercest political tumult of a hundred years. Heedless of the warnings of Nature and blind to the plainest teaching of fact, he struggled gallantly forward until he died in harness beneath burdens he was utterly unable either to relinquish or sustain.

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The Fourth Party were soon openly antagonistic to Sir Stafford Northcote and took no especial pains to conceal their feeling. In private they invariably called him 'the Goat.' This was at first a personal allusion to his beard, but it was afterwards more generally applied to all Conservatives who were thought to be 'weak-kneed.' They found themselves hampered in their conflicts with Mr. Gladstone by those who should have led the onset. They viewed the line of ex-Ministers on the Front Bench with those feelings of impatience which are natural to able men who see, or think they see, great opportunities of warfare cast away by persons much less able. They suspected Sir Stafford himself of being anxious to form a coalition with the Whigs; and, although they carefully preserved in public an air of elaborate politeness towards their leader, their true disposition was not in doubt.

Their opinions were held by many others in the Conservative party before the session of 1880 was ended; and, as always happens under such circumstances, there grew up a counter-faction in Sir Stafford Northcote's support. This was the beginning of strife. It would be profitless to attempt to trace the petty differences upon which mutual dislike was founded. But by the time the recess drew near disagreements were rife. The Fourth Party decided openly to condemn the want of energy and foresight which marked the leadership of the Opposition. The opportunity presented itself at a party meeting held in the Carlton

Club on August 20. The plan was drawn up by the four colleagues in convivial conclave at the Garrick Club. It was arranged that Mr. Balfour should, in the name of his colleagues, indicate the failure of Sir Stafford Northcote to lead the party in the House of Commons to the satisfaction of its more active adherents. In pursuance of this Mr. Balfour made a very clever speech, in which he contrived to deliver a most damaging criticism of Sir Stafford Northcote's methods without actually mentioning his name or using any discourteous phrase. He obtained a considerable measure of assent from the meeting. 1880 Æt. 31

On the same day Mr. Balfour, by arrangement with his three friends, attacked the Government for their conduct of public business. His indictment had been carefully drawn up by the four partners, and involved a comprehensive survey of the whole session. He complained that the attempt of Ministers to cram too much into a limited time had resulted in general confusion and in the most improper invasion of private members' rights, and he moved that it was inexpedient that 'important measures should be brought under the consideration of the House at a period of the session when it is impossible that they should receive adequate discussion.' Mr. Gladstone was absent through illness and Lord Hartington undertook to reply to these reproaches. He read out to the House some figures, which had been prepared, of the activities of the Fourth Party during the four months since the dissolution. From this it appeared

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that Mr. Gorst had spoken one hundred and five times, and had asked eighteen questions; that Sir Henry Wolff had made sixty-eight speeches and had asked thirty-four questions; and that Lord Randolph Churchill had made seventy-four speeches and had asked twenty-one questions. This statement caused much amusement; and after Sir Stafford Northcote had defended the Conservatives at length from the general charge of obstruction which had been urged on behalf of the Government, Lord Randolph rose to vindicate the honour of the Fourth Party. He had prepared himself for this not unexpected duty by a careful study of an article written by Mr. Gladstone when in Opposition in 1879, justifying or at any rate excusing obstruction. Some of the quotations were very effective. 'The public,' wrote Mr. Gladstone, 'has lately heard much on the subject of obstruction in the House of Commons. . . . But to prolong debate even by persistent iteration on legislative measures is not necessarily an outrage, an offence, or even an indiscretion. For in some cases it is only by the use of this instrument that a small minority with strong views can draw adequate attention to those views. . . . There are abundant instances in which obstruction of this kind has led to the removal of perilous or objectionable matter from legislative measures, and thus to the avoidance of great public evils.' Lord Randolph proceeded to read a sentence which seemed to have been specially conceived in advance to protect the Fourth Party. 'Now, if a great party may obstruct, it is hazardous to award

narrower limits to the small one; for it is precisely in the class of cases where the party is small and the conviction strong that the best instances of warrantable obstruction may be found.' Lord Randolph declared that these passages would be the charter of himself and 'those who acted with him.' He deplored the absence from the House of the Prime Minister and pleaded that, acting upon the sanction of his great Parliamentary experience, the Fourth Party ought to have escaped Lord Hartington's rebuke. He ended by exhorting the Government to cultivate 'the magic of patience.'

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The last appearance of the Fourth Party in the session of 1880 was upon the third reading of the Appropriation Bill, which was not reached till September 4. Notwithstanding the heat of the season and the exhaustion of the House, the member for Woodstock and his friends preserved an air of unrelenting vigilance. Lord Randolph Churchill moved an amendment dwelling on the gravity of the defeat at Maiwand, which he sought to prove, by an elaborate argument based upon the Blue Books, to have been 'mainly attributable to want of foresight, of military knowledge and of caution on the part of the Indian Executive.' His criticisms drew from Lord Hartington a reasonable and weighty reply. Both Sir Henry Wolff and Mr. Balfour spoke at later stages in the debate, and thus the session reached its close. 'The rise of a small body of Conservative free-lances below the gangway,' said the *Times* (September 7), in its review of the session, 'of whom

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Lord Randolph Churchill and Mr. Gorst are the chiefs, is a curious incident, and has originated the half-serious nickname of the "Fourth Party."'

Such were the circumstances attending the rise of the Fourth Party in the beginning of the new Parliament. It must be admitted that Mr. Gladstone was at once their most powerful antagonist and their mainstay. His quick eye discerned very early in the session the menace that was growing below the gangway, and he hastened to respond to the challenge. Perhaps, if he had not been a great and famous Parliamentarian, he would have tried to treat with disdain the arguments of unproved or youthful opponents. He would have left the House during their speeches or, ignoring their criticisms altogether, have contented himself with replying only to the ex-officials on the Front Bench. But his nature prompted him to meet the strongest opposition from whatever quarter it might be offered. His generous care for the life and vigour of the House of Commons drew from him a frank recognition of talent wherever or however displayed. He had his favourites on both sides of the House, and he rallied with measureless good-temper and all his most formidable and glittering weapons of debate to the attacks of the Fourth Party and especially of their leader. Often and often he riddled them and crushed them and pulverised them or reasoned with them patiently or cast them aside with a stern rebuke; and as often they returned by other paths unwearied to the attack.

The Prime Minister was indeed on various

occasions the innocent cause of delaying his own legislation. He was always delighted to expound obscure or difficult questions for the benefit of friends or opponents. Of this amiable weakness Lord Randolph and his friends took, we may be sure, the fullest advantage whenever the pace of Government business seemed to be undesirably rapid. In his most insinuating manner the member for Woodstock — 'Woodcock,' it was irreverently called on one occasion — would rise in his place and request the Prime Minister to explain some clause or subsection of a Bill to the Committee. Mr. Gladstone would invariably respond to this invitation with evident alacrity and frequently at considerable length. The wealth of fact and argument with which in a single unpremeditated speech he often enriched the debate served lesser mortals with new ideas. When these were exhausted, Mr. Gorst would get up and thank the Prime Minister for his lucid exposition, which he would say had made everything perfectly intelligible to him, with the exception of one point, upon which he would be most grateful to receive further information. When Mr. Gladstone had made a second lengthy speech upon this, it was Sir Henry Wolff's turn to state how clear all had been made to his comprehension also — with a single exception. 'If you speak again,' growled Sir William Harcourt, a sterner partisan, on one celebrated occasion to his chief, 'we shall be here till morning.' But it should not be supposed from this account that Mr. Gladstone lost by his invariable practice of giving his best to the

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House. Although now and then his opponents may have snatched some trifling advantage from the superabundance of his strength, no qualities but his own could have surmounted the amazing perplexities of the '80 Parliament or have guided the Liberal party through its perils. So long as his light lasted the House of Commons lived, and amid the fiercest passions and even scenes of violence preserved its hold upon the sympathies and the imagination of the whole world; and at his death it sank at once, perhaps for ever, in public esteem.

The proceedings and progress of the Fourth Party in the House of Commons did not escape the attention of Lord Beaconsfield and that great man regarded them from the first with high approval. Sir Henry Wolff had already consulted him upon the Bradlaugh controversy. He had known Lord Randolph since Oxford days. He was on friendly terms with all the four friends; but it was Mr. Gorst with whom his relations were most intimate. He took a keen interest in all their Parliamentary manœuvres. He liked to feel himself in touch with the new men and especially with the young men whom the Parliament was bringing into notice and, so far from frowning on their independence, he encouraged them with advice and approbation. He did not often revisit the House of Commons after his elevation to the peerage; but one of these rare excursions was for the purpose of watching the Fourth Party at work and to hear Lord Randolph speak. He made particular inquiries as to what was thought of the Fourth Party in Ministerial circles.

In the early spring of 1881, immediately before the commencement of his last illness, he met Sir Henry James at a dinner given by Sir William Harcourt. 'Well,' he said, 'what do you think of Randolph?' Sir Henry James praised his Parliamentary instincts and aptitude. 'Ah, yes, you are quite right,' rejoined Lord Beaconsfield, 'when they come in they will have to give him anything he chooses to ask for and in a very short time they will have to take anything he chooses to give them.' During the autumn Lord Beaconsfield invited Mr. Gorst to visit him at Hughenden, and talked to him with much freedom about the policy and influence of the Fourth Party, about Ireland and the general political situation. 1880 ÆT. 31

'Lord B.,' wrote Gorst to Lord Randolph Churchill (November 9), 'was in his talk anything but Goaty: he generally expressed great confidence in us, thought we had a brilliant future before us, and promised to help and advise us as much as he could. I can in a letter only state dogmatically what the oracle said, without giving all his arguments:—

'1. We ought *not* to pledge ourselves to support the Government in any coercive measures for Ireland. They have encouraged agitation: they have adopted dilatory and inefficient proceedings: and they don't deserve the confidence of Parliament. We should therefore hold ourselves free to take what course we think best when the Government lay their proposals before us. B. will prevent Northcote, if he can, from making any more pledges. Meanwhile our attitude may be ostentatiously one of reserve. There is a precedent for suspending the Habeas Corpus to suppress Ribbon outrages in the Westmeath Act of 1871.

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'2. B. himself broached the idea that Gladstone may buy off the Irish landlords. He thinks this would be to us a very dangerous move. But there is no use in talking about it either in public or private. Nor can we say how the matter should be dealt with till the move is made. B. has always been in favour of the purchase by the tenant under Bright's clauses: Lord Salisbury has always supported an extension of this.

'3. He scouted the idea of Northcote thinking of coalition or being inclined to Derby; and did not bear out what Wolff said about his supporting Derby in the late Cabinet. We need not consult Northcote when Parliament is not sitting. It would be good policy to abuse Government for not summoning Parliament to consider the state of Ireland, and to say that their object in not doing so was to conceal their Eastern policy. We should always courteously inform N., through the Whip, of any step we are about to take in the House of Commons, and listen with respect and attention to anything he may say about it; his remarks, even when we disagree with him, will be well worth attention. But just at present *we need not be too scrupulous about obeying our leader*. An open rupture between us would, however, be most disastrous; but Lord B. thinks if we are courteous and firm Northcote will make no open rupture, and will not throw us over. . . .

'4. Upon alteration of the rules of the House there is to be the most absolute and unyielding resistance. Cairns has agreed to this, and they will force N. to be firm. There was a committee on the subject twenty years ago, which took some very interesting evidence, including that of M. Guizot on the *clôture*, which we ought to look up.'

Mr. Gorst was not the only member of the Fourth Party who was encouraged by the Tory leader. 'Lord Beaconsfield,' writes Sir Henry Wolff, 'whom I had known nearly from my childhood, having asked

me to call, I went in the autumn of 1880 to the house in Curzon Street where he was then living and where the next year he died. We discussed the situation and I explained how the action of the Conservative party was crippled by the over-caution — not to say indecision — of Sir Stafford Northcote, which led him constantly to throw us over. He replied almost word for word as follows: — 1880 ÆT. 31

'When Mr. Gladstone announced his withdrawal from public life I fully believed his statement, which was confirmed to me from special sources in which I placed the most implicit reliance. I thought that when he was gone Northcote would be able to cope with anyone likely to assume the lead on the other side, and I wanted rest. I now much regret having retired from the House of Commons, as Mr. Gladstone, contrary to my firm persuasion, returned. I fully appreciate your feelings and those of your friends; but you must stick to Northcote. He represents the respectability of the party. I wholly sympathise with you all, because I never was respectable myself. In my time the respectability of the party was represented by * * * a horrid man; but I had to do as well as I could; you must do the same. Don't on any account break with Northcote; but defer to him as often as you can. Whenever it becomes too difficult you can come to me and I will try to arrange matters. Meanwhile I will speak to him.'

The countenance and kindness thus shown to a rebellious group by so great a man as Lord Beaconsfield filled the hearts of the Fourth Party with a

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sense of elation. They reflected with satisfaction upon the events of the session. With astonishing rapidity they had risen to a position of influence in Parliament; their action attracted every day an increasing interest from the public. They commanded the serious attention of the Conservative party and enjoyed the favour of its famous leader. Ministers and ex-Ministers eyed them with equal apprehension. Older members were inquisitive about their plans. They looked forward to the brightest future. Yet there were already gathering clouds. Jealousies in a numerous troop had followed closely on success. Their own contemporaries in the party were quick to resent the formation of a clique and still more the prominence which was accorded to it. The great Tory newspapers laboured assiduously to ignore their existence and, when compelled, alluded to their proceedings only with a sneer. The life and soul of the Tory Opposition, they were freely represented as hostile to its interests. Sir Stafford Northcote seems from the beginning to have scented danger. 'I am inclined to think,' he wrote complacently to Gorst, as soon as Parliament had risen (September 15, 1880), 'that the Fourth Party has done enough for its fame, and that it will be the wiser course for its members now quietly to take their places in the main body, where they will have work enough and to spare.' Gorst, in reply, descanted on the advantages of combination. Each member of the Fourth Party felt stronger for the support and wiser for the counsel of his friends; and he assured

Sir Stafford that together they would form a weapon of political warfare which could not fail to be formidable 'in his hands.' 1880 Æt. 31

Thus Mr. Gorst to his leader. But the next day a new plan presented itself to him and this he imparted half in fun to his friends. It was in effect that Sir Stafford's proposition should be solemnly embraced, that the Fourth Party should after mature deliberation, at his request, give up the idea — which they had never seriously entertained — of a separate party and 'take their places in the main body,' by sitting immediately behind their leader on the second bench above the gangway. From this new position, adopted at Sir Stafford's special desire, Mr. Gorst thought that the conduct of the Opposition could be much more effectively directed than from below the gangway and that its leader would very soon fall completely under the control of the masterful men behind him. Lord Randolph Churchill and Sir Henry Wolff both scouted this proposal and supplied a number of reasons against it. Sir Henry Wolff was greatly perturbed at the idea of relinquishing ground which seemed to give the right to treat with party leaders, as he described it, *de puissance à puissance;* and he pointed to Sir Stafford's anxiety as a proof of the advantages of independence. Mr. Balfour's argument was single, substantial, and conclusive. The length of his legs made it indispensable to his comfort that he should sit upon a Front Bench and nothing would induce him to change his quarters. So the matter was settled accordingly;

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but it is curious that in after-years Lord Randolph used often to relate this story as an instance of Mr. Gorst's Parliamentary knowledge and shrewdness and would frankly admit that if his advice had been followed all legitimate objects might have been attained without the friction and disturbance that ensued.

The Fourth Party had other friends beside Lord Beaconsfield.

Sir Henry Wolff to Lord Randolph Churchill.

Cromwell House, Putney: September 29, 1880.

My dear Randolph, — After you left yesterday I received two very handsome tributes to the Fourth Party — one from Lord Cadogan, who said that he would look with dread at its being done away with, as being the only portion of the Conservative party that did any good at all — the other was from a man whose name I cannot recollect, and who came up to me in St. James Street to say he had been staying with Chenery, the Editor of the *Times*, who had expressed himself very warmly as to the future of the Fourth Party. I shall try and see Chenery; and as Burrows was sent to the Wali's forces I shall endeavour, I hope with better success, to confirm his fidelity,

Ever yours sincerely,
H. D. W.

While opinions were thus divided it was not unnatural that Lord Randolph and his friends should wish to give some public demonstration of their influence and to show that they were not without friends in high places. Mr. Balfour became their ambassador and Lord Salisbury, probably after consultation with Lord Beaconsfield, accepted an

invitation to address a meeting at Woodstock. Just outside the Woodstock gate of Blenheim Park the road passes through a considerable courtyard, surrounded on every side by lofty walls and pierced only by the gateway. A temporary roof of tarpaulins erected over this converted the highway into a spacious hall; and here on November 30, 1880, Lord Salisbury and Lord Randolph Churchill first appeared together in political association. The meeting attracted much notice in the country and the attitude of the Tory leaders in the House of Lords towards the independent group which had so severely hustled their colleagues in the House of Commons was, of course, the subject of much comment and speculation. This delicate topic was, however, handled with dexterous caution by the principal speakers. Lord Randolph Churchill, who took the chair, enlarged upon the loyalty of himself and his friends to Lord Beaconsfield but avoided all mention of Sir Stafford Northcote's name. Lord Salisbury, on his part, was careful to pay an ample tribute to the 'sagacious guidance' of Sir Stafford early in his speech and then he proceeded to praise the energy and ability of the member for Woodstock. The meaning of the demonstration was variously interpreted by the newspapers. The Liberal organs regarded it as a further proof of the growing power of the Fourth Party. The Conservative papers believed, or affected to believe, that the rebellious partnership was now dissolved and that the erring friends had been welcomed back to the party fold.

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'It appears,' said the *Times*, 'that Lord Randolph Churchill and Sir Henry Wolff are not bent on forming a new party with the assistance of Mr. Balfour and Mr. Gorst.'

The correspondence of the Fourth Party is extensive and would be highly diverting to anyone who knew the Conservative side of the House of Commons in the early 'eighties. Lord Randolph's private letters do not lend themselves to publication as readily as those of some other eminent persons. They are spontaneous and scrappy. They deal with the little ordinary commonplaces of the writer's life. They reflect his mood at the moment. They are full of personal allusions which would be pointless without names and much too pointed with them. He abominated priggishness in all its forms. No one ever wrote to his friends with less regard to ceremony or with more unaffected frankness. Any piece of gossip, any quaint conceit or joke or piece of solemn drollery, any sharp judgment that occurred to him, went upon the paper without an after-thought. Every passing shadow or gleam of sunlight which fell upon him marked his pages with strong contrasts of feeling often extravagantly and recklessly expressed. Nevertheless his correspondence with Sir Henry Wolff has an air of gay and generous friendship, strong with an attractiveness of its own. But there runs through it a recurring sense of weariness and of disgust at politics, which seems to have alternated with his periods of great exertion even during these most merry and successful years of his life.

He delighted in receiving Wolff's letters at all times: 'The only fault I find with them is that they are too short; I should like several volumes.' 'Your letters are to me like a glass of the best champagne — exhilarating and stimulating.' 'You have such an entrancing style, even when writing about the simplest matters, that one recognises at once the statesman and the man of letters.' 'It is only your versatile and brilliant genius which could produce such lively correspondence in the dull season.' He paints his own oratorical achievements in glowing colours: 'I had a most warm welcome at Oldham. The meeting numbered some six hundred — all working men. I spoke for fifty-five minutes — quite entrancing (my speech). What would you have given to have heard it!!! I will, however, declaim it to you when we meet. Fair Trade and taxing the foreigner went down like butter. How the latter is to be done I don't know. . . .' (September 10, 1881.) 1880–1884

And a few weeks later: 'Well! Hull was a triumph. I never had such a success with a large audience. Every point told surprisingly. In my second speech my reference to your successful contest with Bradlaugh provoked the greatest enthusiasm. I was received yesterday at the Carlton *à bras ouverts*. I see the Radical provincial press is beside itself with indignation' (November 3, 1881). 'I received the Glasgow invitation — most politely worded it is, and I have accepted it. I only hope it may turn out well, and that you are not trying me *au dessus de mes forces*. It seems a presumptuous

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thing to go and preach to a lot of Scotchmen on home politics, which they probably understand much better than I do. However, *de l'audace*, &c.' (October 24, 1882.)

When Lord Randolph was abroad — as he often was for his health, or in 1883 during his retirement after his father's death — Wolff kept him informed about political things. These did not always allure him. 'All your news,' he wrote in January, 1882, from Monte Carlo, 'about your conversation with various distinguished people concerning myself is very pleasant reading, but my disinclination to return to England for the meeting of Parliament grows stronger every day and I seem to have lost all interest in things political. I am happy in Capua, and the thought of once more engaging with Goats and Gibsons *et hoc genus omne* makes me sick. Old * * * came and bored me yesterday for more than an hour, and I had a providential escape from * * * the other day; and yet it is this class of individual of whom the great Tory party is mainly composed. I think I shall copy Gladstone and take to reading Dante and Homer — after,' he adds prudently, 'I have got through one or two French novels I have by me.'

He always followed his friend's doings with attention. 'I have just risen,' he writes July 31, 1883, 'in a state of singular emotion after perusing your Demosthenic oration at Portsmouth'; and again, 'I wonder how things are going to-night. I dare say you are delivering a telling speech. (It is the dinner hour, 8.30 P.M.!) How I wish I was there

to listen and cheer!' And again (August 17, 1883): 1880–1884
'You appear to have been sustaining the whole weight of Opposition. I hope you mean to take a good holiday when it is all over. I am quite clear that W. E. G. has been very much bothered by your Suez Canal questions.' At another time he counsels reserve: 'I read with interest both your speeches at Banbury and at Portsmouth, and think that they were as good as the occasion admitted of or demanded. At the same time I wish I could convince you of what Chief Justice Morris calls "the energy of silence." . . . Gorst and I took a walk on Sunday on Hampstead Heath. I have never been there before. There is a capital inn there called "Jack Straw's Castle," where Gorst and I agreed the Fourth Party ought to go for Saturday and Sunday during the Session to recruit their strength' (October 2, 1882). He was bitterly offended by the opposition which on various grounds — partly, no doubt, to annoy him — was threatened against his brother's candidature for the Carlton Club. 'I am more vexed,' he wrote from Gastein, 'than I can tell you about this business of Blandford and the Carlton Club. I wrote to Dyke before starting, particularly enjoining on him the necessity of making no move unless the consent of the committee was assured. And now how can anyone occupy a more unpleasant position than Blandford does? He has publicly changed his politics, to please me more than for any other reason, and owing to H. Chaplin's action his overtures to the Conservatives are spurned. . . .

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H. Chaplin and Baron de Worms together will soon make the Tory party too hot to hold me. I shall certainly take my name off the Carlton when I return to town, and a very little would make me consummate H. C.'s and B. de W.'s joy by retiring altogether from the party and Parliament. They do not know how easy it would be to get rid of me. I am sick of politics, which only play the dickens with one's health, and are a dreadful tie. I think the party occupies a worse position now than it did in 1880. But its leading members are so purblind, so given over to the most utter infatuation, that I believe they are of opinion that the country would replace them in power. I only trust, for the sake of the country, that they are as mistaken as I believe them to be.' (August 8, 1883.)

Here is the account of a most famous event of which Gastein was the scene: —

'You will be glad to hear that the Emperor of Germany had the honour of being introduced to me on Saturday last at a tea-party at Count Lehndorff's. This Count, I must tell you, is a Prussian who owns the *bicoque* which I am inhabiting with my suite. He waited on us on Saturday afternoon, and with almost Oriental deference begged that we would honour the Emperor by meeting him. I write all this, lest you should see garbled accounts in the newspapers. The Emperor, I must admit, was very guarded in his conversation, which was confined to asking me how long I had been here and whether I had come for my health. I imitated his reserve.

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My wife, however, sat by him at tea, and had much conversation, which, I have ascertained, was confined to the most frivolous topics. I have reason to believe, though it is humiliating to confess it, that the fame of the Fourth Party has not yet reached the ears of this despot. I must say he is a very fine old fellow, and the Germans seem really to love him. There were several other Prussians and Austrians present; but I was rather bored on the whole and so was my wife. They wanted us to go the next night, when they had arranged some *tableaux* for the old boy; but I sent an excuse on the ground that I was in deep mourning. We did not come here to kowtow to monarchs.

. . . . . .

'I have just been reading a book on cribbage and I find that in all the games we have played together we have played wrong. The non-dealer at the commencement has the right to mark three holes as compensation for his not having the crib. This you have never allowed me to do. Please therefore send me, by return of post, a cheque for 25*l*., being the amount you have unjustly and illegally taken from me.' (November 14, 1883.)

Sometimes his letters take a graver tone: —

Blenheim Palace: October 30, 1883.

My dear Wolff, — Your suspicions of intrigues are apparently so deep-rooted that they do not even exclude me from the range of their operations. I have not seen or heard of Chenery since he dined with me last June, nor should I at

1880–1884 any time have any communication with him of which you would not be fully cognisant.

I cannot explain the sentence in Saturday's *Times* which seems to have exercised you so much; but, in any case, I wonder that you do not see that these recurring speculations or statements anent the Fourth Party, as to whether it is alive or dead, whether it is united or disrupted, is a strong testimony to its value as a political instrument, and as to the proof of the interest and curiosity of the public in its proceedings. The more Chenery or others in the Press make statements about it, the more I am pleased. I will be at the Carlton at eight o'clock on Thursday.

Yours ever,

RANDOLPH S. C.

And here is a rebuke: —

Blenheim Palace: December 31, 1883.

My dear Wolff, — I have had a very curious letter from the Queen, which I will not show you when we meet.

Yours ever,

RANDOLPH S. C.

Blenheim Palace: January 2, 1884.

My dear Wolff, — You are not generally slow to take a hint, therefore your failure to understand my letter which you received on New Year's Day is, I think, a pretence. In political friendships confidence must be mutual, and measure for measure the rule. You wrote to me that you had received a very curious letter from Lord S., and that you would show it to me when we met. When I receive 'very curious letters from political personages' I have hitherto sent them to you without delay. Your cautious behaviour about Lord S.'s letter seemed to call for similar caution on my part. I therefore wrote to you that I had received a very curious letter from the Queen, which I should not show you when we met, and I shall not.

Yours ever,

RANDOLPH S. C.

LORD RANDOLPH CHURCHILL. SIR HENRY WOLFF. MR. BALFOUR. MR. GORST.

THE FOURTH PARTY.

Reproduced from Leslie Ward's Cartoon, December 1st, 1880, by permission of the proprietors of "Vanity Fair."

Lord Randolph's correspondence with Sir Henry Wolff has carried the reader somewhat in advance of the regular course of the narrative. His letters in 1883 and 1884 belong to a region of more serious disputes than those with which this chapter deals. The swift unravelling of events was to bring varied fortunes and many adventures to the four friends who now delighted to 'act together.' They were to play a decisive part in great affairs. Yet it is probable that the early sessions of their comradeship were the joyous days of the Fourth Party. 'Politics,' wrote Lady Randolph, 'seemed more like a game of chess than the life-and-death struggle it was so soon to become for some of them.' Plots and ambuscades prepared with severe impartiality, amid fun and laughter, against both Front Benches; stormy battles in the House; generous comradeship and glorious discomfiture of foes; miniature Cabinet Councils; toy whitebait dinners, filled the years with merry excitement. One single enormous sofa could contain the whole party — leaders and followers — at once. They were cartooned together in *Vanity Fair* — Lord Randolph speaking from his famous corner seat, the others and Mr. Balfour (who travelled from Scotland in order to be painted) sprawling on the Bench beside him. Dinner with the Fourth Party was regarded as a rare distinction and justly restricted in its scope. Their political action was not always the result of long premeditation. 'On one occasion,' writes Sir Henry Wolff, 'Balfour gave a dinner at his house, to which he

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invited the Fourth Party and some other members of Parliament, amongst them Sir R. Cross and Mr. Pell. Someone at length said, "We must return to the House on account of the Bill," of which I do not remember the subject. Randolph said, "We will all go and all speak." Cabs were sent for, and the one I drove in was a few minutes later than his. When I arrived at the House he was already speaking.' Sometimes their fiercest opponents, Sir William Harcourt or Sir Charles Dilke, shared their board; though not, it is presumed, their secrets. Nay, Mr. Chamberlain himself was invited, though this greatly shocked the Duke of Marlborough, who did not understand how his son could cultivate social relations with a person of such pernicious opinions, and was quite sure House of Commons traditions must have greatly changed since he succeeded. One member of the Government, mentioning to the Liberal Whips that he was dining with the Fourth Party, was told that 'so long as he kept those four fellows away he could stay any length of time he liked.' Lord Randolph's house, in St. James's Place, was *next door* to Sir Stafford Northcote's; but luckily the walls were thick; and here we see the Fourth Party gathered in festive council round the dining-room table, amid the haze of countless cigarettes. Wolff has discovered some new intrigue among the 'Goats' or the Radicals or the Parnellites. Gorst has a plan for meeting it. Their leader examines it all with a gay and brilliant vivacity which made his companionship

precious to those to whom it was frankly given; and in the background, rather silent, ready enough with chaff and counsel, but difficult to rouse to action, sits Arthur Balfour, dreamily revolving longer calculations of his own. 1880 Æt. 31

Here, then, for the present we may leave them and their leader, happy in the enjoyment of active and pugnacious irresponsibility, tasting the first pleasures of success and fame and displacing with the haughty assertions of youthful ardour the tame acceptances of age. It is time to turn to those grave events which marched in crowded and uninterrupted procession from almost every quarter of the Queen's dominions, to the embarrassment and perplexity of her Ministers.

CHAPTER IV

IRELAND UNDER STORM

'Your oppression taught them to hate — your concessions to brave you; you exhibited to them how scanty was the stream of your bounty, and how full the tribute of your fear.' — Lord John Russell (*Speech*, Feb. 7, 1837).

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The decision of the constituencies in 1880 had no reference to Ireland. Lord Beaconsfield's warning letter was regarded as a somewhat transparent attempt to divert attention from the record of his Government. Politicians were absorbed by controversies upon foreign and colonial affairs, upon Turkish atrocities, Afghan disasters, and South African annexations. The Prime Minister seemed to be under the impression that the Irish Question had been settled, so far as he was concerned, by the Church Act of 1869 and the Land Act of 1870. The Queen's Speech contained no suggestion of Irish Land legislation; and the supporters of the Ministry had assembled at Westminster eager to discuss every subject — from the Treaty of Berlin to the shooting of hares and rabbits — except the subject of Ireland. They soon found themselves debating little else. 'I frankly admit,' said Mr. Gladstone four years later, 'I had had much upon my hands connected with the

doings of the Beaconsfield Government in almost every quarter of the world, and I did not know the severity of the crisis that was already swelling upon the horizon and that shortly after rushed upon us like a flood.' 1880 ÆT. 31

For more than three years Irish conditions had been growing steadily worse. The yield and value of the crops had dwindled under three successive bad seasons and the number of evictions had increased. There was a deep and general feeling of unrest and discontent among the peasantry. All the permanent elements of revolt were nervously awake. A new man had seized upon the national leadership; a new movement was gathering behind him. The Fenian societies and the Clan-na-Gael had long been hampered in practical action by the purity of their principles. Armed insurrection for the sake of national independence is a spirited and uncompromising creed, but the opportunities in which it can be carried into actual practice must necessarily be rare. Meanwhile it blocked the way of less heroic expedients. The Fenians contained within their ranks many men who were willing, 'when the time came,' to risk or cast away life and liberty in their country's cause. They could not be accused of insincerity. But 'the hour' lagged; the time did not come; and nothing remained but to keep alive from year to year, in all its orthodox integrity, the Fenian doctrine.

The process, when maintained over a considerable period, of professing opinions and intentions for the

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execution of which no occasion is afforded, is apt to become artificial. The most blood-curdling oaths and sentiments tend to degenerate into ritual. They may preserve in all their vivid squalor the hateful memories of the past; they cannot be said to exert much influence upon the politics of the present. Had the flag of Ireland been unfurled in civil war, the Fenian societies would have assumed a gigantic importance. Pending that event, they stood aside and allowed the English Government to proceed on its path unmolested. They had long despised Parliamentary agitation. They regarded the House of Commons, not without reason, as a school for Anglicising Irishmen. They expelled from their order any man who took the Parliamentary oath. They abhorred constitutional methods, however effective they might be, as involving some tacit recognition of British institutions. They paid no attention to social movements or to agrarian conflicts. Looking with profound distrust upon all who would not go the whole way with them, they remained a great, secret, silent army, gathered around the watch-fires of unquenchable hatred, morosely forecasting the chances of a battle on which the day would never dawn.

The rise of Parnell in Parliament and the anger which his obstructive tactics evidently excited in England filled these fierce dreamers with a new interest. The impression which his reserved yet commanding personality made upon all who were brought into contact with it, was intense. The deepening discontent and distress of the peasantry

seemed to herald the approach of a new opportunity. Fenian opinion was perplexed and divided. Some scorned the hateful alliance with constitutionalism. 'Freedom comes from God's right hand.' A pretence of loyalty, but in reality treason all along the line, would dishonour a national movement and end in sham loyalty and sham treason. Others urged with Davitt that unless the Fenians threw their hearts into the real stirrings of the Irish people, and helped them in their immediate and material need, they would cease to represent the life of their country. In 1879 the principles of doctrinaire treason were preferred. In 1880 a more practical view prevailed and the 'new departure' was sanctioned. 1880 ÆT. 31

The situation was not brought into being by any deliberate or definite action on the part of individuals. It developed of itself in the mysterious unravellings of events. First came Mr. Butt with his organised party of constitutional Home Rulers, then Parnell with his band of fighting obstructives, then Michael Davitt with his schemes of 'agrarian agitation,' and finally the failure of the potato and the cruel severity of the winter of 1879. Economic well-being often takes the heart out of racial animosities. The cause of nationality may excite the educated revolutionist; but the pinch of famine is required before the humble tiller of the soil can be enlisted in his thousands. A political movement to be dangerous must find its substance in social evil. It was the combination of agrarian with national aspirations and the gathering together of all their

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several forces in one determined hand that imparted so sinister and terrible a complexion to Ireland in 1880. Scarcity and poverty supplied the impulse, and misery brought forth her progeny of outrage.

All this formidable movement had already become defined and was rapidly developing when the change of Government occurred. The elections in Ireland had returned sixty pledged Home Rulers to the House of Commons, and a majority of these elected Mr. Parnell as their leader. Mr. Forster, the new Chief Secretary, found many causes for anxiety in the accounts which were given him at the Castle. The sufferings of the winter of 1879 had roused a spirit of violent discontent among the people. The numerous tenant defence societies had been formed by Michael Davitt into the one great organisation of the Land League. Mr. Parnell, after some hesitation, had thrown in his lot whole-heartedly with the agrarian agitation. In his speeches at Westport and Limerick he had urged the farmers to keep 'a firm grip on their homesteads' and not to allow themselves to be dispossessed. One thousand and ninety-eight evictions, or more than double the number of 1877, had been carried out, amid scenes of riot and misery, in 1879. A furious animosity against the landlords convulsed the tenantry; and the Fenian and Parliamentary leaders openly declared their intention of using the driving power of the land movement as the means by which national independence was to be achieved.

In the face of these facts the first decision of the

new Minister, or that forced upon him by his colleagues in the Cabinet, was singularly ill-judged. The Peace Preservation Act which had been passed in 1870, and continued amended by the late Government in 1875, would expire on June 1. It was a mild but not ineffective measure which provided for the compulsory attendance of witnesses, for taxing localities with the payment of compensation, for the suppression of seditious newspapers; and prohibited the carrying of arms in party processions — and other similar regulations. Certainly nothing in the state of Ireland disclosed by every channel of official information, either in regard to agrarian discontent or secret associations, justified its being allowed to lapse. The draft of the Bill for its renewal, prepared by his predecessor, confronted the new Minister on his arrival at the Castle. Out of sixty-nine resident magistrates consulted, sixty-one had declared the re-enactment indispensable and eleven of these had asked for further powers. The growth of agrarian crime told its own tale. But Lord Beaconsfield's letter, though it had not produced much impression on British electors, had at least had the effect of throwing the Irish vote in the English boroughs solidly on to the Liberal side. Many sympathetic speeches and friendly offices had been exchanged between Liberal candidates and Irish politicians, many lofty sentiments about the rights of nationalities had been uttered, and all had proceeded together to the poll as the equal friends of freedom. It would have been awkward after this — as the late

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Government in fixing the date of the dissolution may have uncharitably foreseen — to inaugurate the new era for Ireland by 'exceptional legislation in abridgment of liberty.' The Royal Speech accordingly announced that the Peace Preservation Act would not be renewed and that the Government would rely 'upon the provisions of the ordinary law, firmly administered, for the maintenance of peace and order.' Thus, at a time when measures of exceptional precaution, together with large remedial legislation, were both indispensable, the existing securities of the law were relaxed and remedial legislation was entirely neglected. The failure to deal with so vast and complicated a question as Irish land on the part of Ministers who had just taken office may be understood. The abandonment of the Peace Preservation Act in the face of growing danger cannot be defended. It was immediately condemned in the House of Lords by the Duke of Marlborough fresh from his Lord-Lieutenancy, and it was generally believed that the Cabinet had not come to their decision without considerable misgivings.

All illusions as to the comparative unimportance of Irish troubles were quickly dispelled as the session advanced. The state of the country grew worse from day to day. The Irish members maintained an unrelenting clamour in the House of Commons. The good harvest of 1880 left the peasantry still hampered with arrears and in many cases quite unable to pay the rents demanded of them. More than a thousand

evictions had already been effected during the first six months of 1880. In June a 'Compensation for Disturbance Bill' was introduced by Mr. Forster with the object of staying, or at least diminishing, the other evictions which were threatening in hundreds all over the country. This Bill — 'a ten minutes' Bill, if ever there was one,' as Lord Randolph Churchill called it — 'an after-thought, not a deliberately counselled measure; an inspiration, but not from above' — could be justified only by the acute and imminent danger of the Irish situation. And as yet public opinion in England was not sufficiently impressed with that danger. The Bill was fiercely disputed in the House of Commons, the Fourth Party ever in the forefront of the battle; and although Lord Hartington supported it in a speech of exceptional power, many Liberals were absent from the division when it passed and more than twenty voted with the Conservative party. It was summarily rejected by the House of Lords.

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Upon this measure Lord Randolph delivered the first of those Irish speeches which, in the course of the next three years, were to win him acceptance as an authority upon Irish questions. The importance of enterprise and pertinacity in the conduct of Parliamentary Opposition cannot be underrated when Ministers have to be harassed and minorities inflamed. But mere activity, however bold and tireless, will never by itself make a Parliamentary reputation, and the readiest tactician in the House of Commons will lack real influence

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unless he is master of some important subject upon which he can add to the information and distinction of debate. Lord Randolph's training in Ireland — official and unofficial alike — equipped him as scarcely any other English member was equipped for the discussion of the one vast and predominant question of the day. He took rank almost at once among those to whom Parliament would most gladly or most gravely listen upon Irish affairs, and in his speeches he revealed a range of thought, an authority of manner, and a wealth of knowledge which neither friends nor foes attempted to dispute.

'I happened,' he said (July 5), 'for a period of ten weeks, when the distress was at its height, to be associated with a committee that was relieving that distress on a very vast scale, and my work in connection with it occupied me from eight to ten hours a day. I was in constant communication with the Local Government Board and its inspectors and with the inspectors employed by the committee and with chairmen of boards of guardians in all parts of the country. If any person, free from official responsibility and perfectly unprejudiced, had an opportunity of ascertaining the extent of the distress, I was that person; and I do not hesitate to say that, although it was severe at times and in certain districts, and would have been disastrous but for the timely relief afforded; yet it never at any time justified, and does not now warrant, the introduction of a Bill of this kind. Not only was food distributed in enormous quantities, but clothes and bedding,

and excellent seed which would contribute to prepare for a return of former prosperity. But although the distress was great, the fraud and imposture which sprang up alongside of it were also great. If Ireland, under God's providence, is this year favoured with a good harvest, the Irish people will, I believe, be able to extricate themselves from their difficulties, without recourse being had to any such legislation as is now proposed.' 1880 ÆT. 31

Having described the Bill as 'the first step in a social war,' and criticised it in correct and elaborate detail, he made an attack on the Chief Secretary as true as it was unkind. 'When the right honourable gentleman took office, he somewhat rashly accepted the popular verdict that in so doing he conferred a great honour upon Ireland. He seemed to be under the impression that his acceptance of the post would change the face of the country and the nature of the people; that from the mere fact of his disembarkation at Kingstown would result a state of things in which the inhabitants of the country would be found contented, and that law, order, property, and life would become immediately secure. He declared that with himself at the helm, legislation of a coercive nature was no longer necessary, that he could with ease carry on the government of Ireland by means of the ordinary law. His conduct seems to resemble the conduct of a miner going into a fiery and explosive mine and declaring that safety lamps were unnecessary, that an ordinary tallow candle was good enough for him.

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Meeting with difficulties at the outset, the Chief Secretary came to the conclusion that the best thing to do was to repair to the House with a policy of appeals. He appealed to the Protestants and Catholics of Ireland to unite in an hysterical embrace in celebration of his accession to office. He made a pathetic appeal to the Irish members and landlords to help him; the whole burden of the business being, "For God's sake, keep the country quiet, or what trouble I shall be in!" The policy of appeals not proving altogether satisfactory, the Chief Secretary produced the policy of bribes — a policy which was marked by the generosity which is characteristic of people who are dealing with the property of others. I fear that the next phase of the Government policy will be one of repression.'

The rejection of this Bill, although not unexpected, was a heavy blow to Mr. Forster and the signal for a fierce accession to the Irish agitation. The Government pocketed the affront which had been offered them and had perforce to content themselves with promising a Land Bill next session. Most disquieting reports continued to come from Ireland. Evictions led to riots; tenants who took the places of evicted occupiers were assaulted, their ricks were burned, their beasts were mutilated; arms were stolen from a vessel in Queenstown Harbour; and rumours of secret brotherhoods and of dynamite conspiracies were rife. So the Parliamentary session came to an end.

The winter of 1880–1 was cruel. In the very

beginning, in a speech at Ennis (September 19), Mr. Parnell prescribed the methods of the Land League. 'Depend upon it,' he said, 'the measure of the Land Bill next session will be the measure of your activity and energy this winter.' He then explained his new invention; 'better than any 81-ton gun,' as it was afterwards described by enthusiastic followers. 'When a man takes a farm from which another has been evicted, you must *show* him on the roadside when you meet him [a voice 'shun him'], in the streets of the town, at the shop counter, in the fair, in the market place, and even in the house of worship, by leaving him severely alone, by putting him into a moral Coventry, by isolating him from his kind as if he were a leper of old — you must show him your detestation of the crime he has committed.'

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The advice was taken. Three days later Lord Erne's agent, a certain Captain Boycott, served ejectment notices upon a number of tenants. His servants left him. The local shopkeepers refused to serve him. The blacksmith and the laundress declined his orders. His crops remained ungathered on the ground. He was 'left severely alone.' The tale of these doings spread to Ulster. One hundred Orangemen offered to march with arms to his relief and to the rescue of his crops. The Government consented. Under protection of infantry, cavalry, and two field guns, and amid the taunts of the cottagers, the harvest was gathered in and the process of 'boycotting' was advertised to

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the whole world. It spread throughout Ireland. Nothing was more unexpected than the precision with which an impulsive and undisciplined peasantry gave effect to this new plan. Whole counties conspired together to make it complete. Every class in the population acquiesced. Public opinion supported the Land League and no moral force sustained the government of the Queen.

Behind and beneath this strange system of excommunication came outrages of various kinds upon property, upon animals, and upon life. There were in 1880 10,457 persons evicted compared with 2,177 in 1877, and 2,590 agrarian crimes compared with 236 in the earlier year. 'It rained evictions,' says Mr. Parnell's biographer; 'it rained outrages. Cattle were houghed and maimed; tenants who paid unjust rents or who took farms from which others had been evicted were dragged from their beds, assaulted, sometimes forced to their knees while shots were fired over their heads, to make them promise submission to the popular desires in future. Bands of peasants scoured the country, firing into the houses of obnoxious individuals. Graves were dug before the doors of evicting landlords. Murder was committed. A reign of terror had in truth commenced.' [1]

'I must say,' wrote General Gordon, who visited the West of Ireland in 1880, 'that the state of our fellow-countrymen in the parts I have named, is worse than that of any people in the world, let alone Europe. I believe that these people are made as we are; that

[1] *Life of Parnell*, R. Barry O'Brien, vol. i. 247.

they are patient beyond belief; loyal, but broken-spirited and desperate; lying on the verge of starvation in places where we would not keep cattle.' 1880 ÆT. 31

Amid such grim and gloomy surroundings the Lord-Lieutenant and his Chief Secretary passed the winter. As early as October they were asking the Cabinet for special powers. Strong reinforcements of troops were moved into the island. In the first days of November a State prosecution was instituted against Mr. Parnell and other leaders of the Land League. Late in that same month the Viceroy, Lord Cowper, intimated that, unless power was taken to suspend the Habeas Corpus Act, he must resign. In December he reiterated his intention and pressed that Parliament should be called together. National and even international attention were riveted upon Ireland. Cabinets were frequent, protracted, vexatious, and indecisive. The harassed Chief Secretary hurried to and fro between the two capitals.

'What more lamentable and ridiculous spectacle,' exclaimed Lord Randolph Churchill at Preston (December 21, 1880), 'has ever been presented than this great Liberal statesman from Bradford, tossed like a shuttlecock from the Irish Executive on to the English Government, tossed back again contemptuously by the English Government on to the Irish Executive — arriving in Dublin and being immediately seized by that horrid, choking nightmare, Revolution — flying back to London and, finding himself amongst its peaceful citizens and busy streets, fancying that he had been the victim of a bad dream,

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laughed out of his convictions by his sneering colleagues — and tearing back again to Dublin, only once more to become a prey to hideous realities!'

The two Ministers who were responsible for Ireland united in a demand for the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act and eventually, after struggles which nearly broke up the Cabinet, they procured the assent of their colleagues. The remedy was desperate, unwarranted, and ill-chosen. Shocking as were the outrages, they were the least part of the dangers that threatened the fabric of society. They were, moreover, much exaggerated by the official figures. Only seven persons were actually murdered during the winter. The statistics were swollen by 1,300 outrages which proved on examination to consist merely of threatening letters and notices. Many more were trivial annoyances. What rendered them formidable were the temper of the people and the constant apprehension of some fearful outburst. Boycotting was the weapon of the Land League, and indeed it may be said that its sinister efficiency was in great measure a preventive of worse crime. In one fashion or another evictions were greatly diminished. Landlords did not dare to assert their rights. The unwritten law of the Land League, supported by public opinion, superseded the law of the land, backed as it was only by physical force.

It was not easy in 1880, though the science of Coercion has made some progress since, to discover what remedies Mr. Forster should have chosen. It is certain that the remedy he chose was wrong. He

seems to have imagined that the agitation depended for its vitality upon certain local leaders; that a comparatively small number of 'village ruffians,' against whom no legal proof existed, but the strongest moral suspicion, were the indispensable and irreplaceable agents of the whole movement. If they were removed, he believed the whole apparatus of terrorism would collapse. If he could obtain power to arrest these men, who were notorious, peace and order would ensue. No greater misreading of the situation was possible. In dealing with a movement which was formidable only because of its almost universal character, he struck at individuals of minor prominence. He encountered profound communistic stirrings, bitter racial hatred, and intense national aspirations by methods which might have been effective against the rowdy larrikins of a slum. In face of widespread lawlessness, principally petty in its character, the head of the Irish Executive fell back on that supreme abrogation of civil law which authorises arrest and imprisonment without trial. Staking his official existence upon a demand for the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act, he prevailed upon a shivering and reluctant Cabinet.

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Parliament was summoned to meet on January 7. 'How,' asked Lord Randolph Churchill (Preston, December 21), in a speech which, from the fact that it was the first of his speeches to be reported *verbatim* in a Metropolitan newspaper, attracted much attention, 'will this Government, who have been only eight months in office, meet Parliament;

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and what will be the message which they will have to announce? They will have to acknowledge the fact that Ireland is in open and successful rebellion; that another government, which knows not the Queen, has supplanted the Government which the English and Scotch people recognise; that this alien government is now, with impunity, directing the destinies of Ireland, issuing its decrees to the Irish people, and has, for six months or more, suspended the liberties, confiscated the property, and imperilled the lives of hundreds and of thousands of the Queen's subjects. They will have to announce that this alien government has its own revenues, its own executive, its own courts of justice, in which persons are arraigned, tried, and condemned, and that persons who are not provided with the passports of that government and who have not enrolled themselves as its subjects, are unable to obtain the necessaries of life and are cut off root and branch from the society of their fellows. They will have to acknowledge that this alien government is the growth of the brief period during which they have held office; that nothing like it has yet been seen in the history of Ireland; and that, before it, the Government of the Queen recoils paralysed and impotent.'

The turbulent course of Irish affairs and Mr. Forster's policy laid the Government open to damaging attack from every quarter. Of this their regular opponents took the fullest advantage and among them no one was more prominent than Lord Randolph Churchill. It was not difficult for a Con-

servative — or, indeed, for an economist — to find fault with the Compensation for Disturbance Bill of 1880, or the Land Bill of 1881; and the Fourth Party encountered both with zeal and ingenuity. But the repressive measures, involving as they did immense abridgments of liberty and wholesale suspension of the most elementary civil rights, offended deeper instincts in Lord Randolph's nature. If as a party man he disliked the Government, he hated Coercion for its own sake; and this double tide of antagonism carried him to lengths which, for a time, disturbed and even destroyed the harmony of the Fourth Party. 1880 ÆT. 31

'People sometimes talk,' he said, 'too lightly of Coercion; it means that hundreds of Irishmen who, if law had been maintained unaltered and had been firmly enforced, would now have been leading peaceful, industrious, and honest lives, will soon be torn off to prison without trial; that others will have to fly the country into hopeless exile; that others, driven to desperation through such cruel alternatives, will perhaps shed their blood and sacrifice their lives in vain resistance to the forces of the Crown; that many Irish homes, which would have been happy if evil courses had been firmly checked at the outset, will soon be bereaved of their most promising ornaments and support, disgraced by a felon's cell and by a convict's garb; and if you look back over the brief period which has been necessary to bring about such terrible results, the mind recoils in horror from the ghastly spectacle of murdered landlords, tenant-farmers tortured, mutilated dumb animals, which

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everywhere disfigure the green and fertile pastures of Ireland. It is to me, and many others who, like myself, have had the good fortune to live amongst the people of that country, to discover their high qualities and their many virtues, and to know that, under a firm and statesmanlike government, immense prosperity must have been their lot, as it is their due — it is, I say, appalling to reflect that all this promise has been for a time blotted out, all progress arrested, and all industry thrown back by one reckless and wanton act on the part of a Government who, at the outset of their career and in the heyday of their youth and of their strength, knew no higher object and had no nobler aim than to obtain at any cost a momentary and apparent advantage over their opponents.'

The troubles of the Ministry did not come singly. The storm in South Africa, like the storm in Ireland, was gathering fast when the change of Government occurred. In both countries the new Ministers were the heirs of error or neglect; in both their own policy was unfortunate. The freedom of races was perhaps the main inspiration of Midlothian. The annexation of the Transvaal in 1879 had been denounced by Mr. Gladstone again and again in terms of eloquent and indignant candour: 'A free European Christian republican community "transformed" against the will of more than three-fourths of the entire people' into 'subjects of a monarchy.' 'Is it not wonderful,' he asked (December 29, 1879), 'to those who are freemen and whose fathers have been freemen and who hope that their children will be

freemen and who consider that freedom is an essential condition of civil life and that without it you can have nothing great and nothing noble in political society, that we are led by an Administration . . . to march upon another body of freemen and against their will to subject them to despotic government?' These were important declarations, and they had been unmistakably approved by the nation. Was it strange that the Boers were led to expect from a Government headed and controlled by the man who had uttered them the restoration of the liberties of which they had been deprived? 1880 ÆT. 31

Moreover, much could be urged in favour of the annexation of 1879 which could not be urged in favour of its continuance. While the Transvaal and Natal alike lay under the shadow of the great Zulu power, it may have been a practical necessity to assume some control over the dealings of the Boers with their terrible neighbour, lest a quarrel recklessly or wrongfully provoked should not only bring massacre into the Transvaal, but also upon those who dwelt within the Queen's dominions. Great Britain was perhaps forced, in the interests of the white man in South Africa, to afford protection to the Boers, and where she extended protection she had a right to claim obedience. But the danger was now removed; the Zulu power was broken; Cetewayo was a prisoner and his armies and military system destroyed. With the close of the Zulu War the all-important argument for annexation disappeared.

The British Government had already carried forward a considerable account with the Boers.

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'They are,' said Mr. Gladstone, 'a people vigorous, obstinate, and tenacious in character, even as we are ourselves.' Driven ever northwards — across the Orange, across the Sand, across the Vaal, by abiding dislike of British rule and organised Government; retreating, like the game they hunted, from the noise of the township and the whistle of the train, the huge white tilted ox-waggons with their nimble horsemen had found a resting-place in a wilderness more savage, more perilous, than any into which the white man had broken. For nearly forty years they had lived alone — fierce, ignorant, and devout, with no law but their rifles, no books but their Bibles and scarcely any occupation but the chase. Gradually, in the valleys, by the drifts of the rivers, under the shelter of gigantic boulders, farms and tiny villages had crept into being. Gradually the long arm of the detested Government, tampering, protecting, enfolding and at last controlling, had embraced them — even here. Was it to be borne? Boer prejudices, Boer sullenness, Boer obstinacy, were bywords. Boer marksmanship was as yet unknown.

To give back the country to the Boers would no doubt have provoked a noisy conflict in Parliament. But the Minister was, partly for that reason, provided with a large majority. The policy of retrocession was right in principle; it would have proved eminently wise in practice; and had Mr. Gladstone's Government acted in office up to the spirit of their declarations in Opposition, South Africa might have escaped a long concatenation of disasters.

Ministers were ill served by their agents. On

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November 19, 1880, Sir Owen Lanyon, in a despatch to the Colonial Office, stated that three-fourths of the population were secretly in favour of the continued annexation and that the excitement was the work of a few agitators.[1] Less than a month afterwards nearly the whole male population of the Transvaal was in arms. On December 20 the deadly rifle-fire at Bronker's Spruit proclaimed the beginnings of serious war. The few regular troops available hurried to the scene, were badly led and soundly beaten. What the Government had denied to justice, they conceded to force. During a series of small combats negotiations were actively pressed and reached a successful termination a few days after the flight of the British detachments from Majuba Hill (February 27, 1881). By this arrangement all the disadvantages of every conceivable policy — and all abounded in disadvantage — were combined. Territory was abandoned; reconciliation was not achieved. The Boers owed little gratitude to the great Power from whom they had shaken themselves free. They rejoiced in the victory of a chosen race over the Midianites. Their Dutch kinsfolk throughout the Colony were naturally proud of their unexpected victories. The British settlers were everywhere humiliated. The British flag was in South Africa associated only with surrender. The loyalists who had fought and risked their all in faith of British power and justice were left to shift for themselves. The attempt to make a virtue of necessity failed

[1] *Cf.* Mr. Forster's 'village ruffians.'

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ignominiously. And at home in England powerful classes, smarting under insult and unaccustomed shame, sat down to nurse revenge.

These errors or misfortunes were hardly to be retrieved. Time might have healed all scars — was already, after fifteen years, in a fair way to heal them — but a more tragic and tremendous history awaited South Africa. When the Transvaal and its rugged inhabitants would have been forgotten, they became famous. The rocks of their wilderness turned, in the perversity of fortune, to gold and diamonds, and a scattered folk who beyond all others shunned the eye of civilisation were thrust into the very centre of the world's affairs. Their notoriety revived a slumbering shame. Their new-found wealth armed at once their own resentful ambition and directed upon them the envy and the malevolence of their British neighbours; and from an unjust annexation and a dishonoured peace there hung an unbroken chain of ever-expanding and ever-darkening events.

The circumstances of the military operations and of the Majuba peace were vehemently denounced in Parliament by the Conservative party. Lord Randolph Churchill seems to have taken little part in these debates. Three years afterwards he condemned the Boers in strong terms for their treatment of the natives, and when the Majuba peace had passed out of the circle of real and burning questions and had become part of the ordinary stock-in-trade of party patter and recrimination, he seems to have

bestowed upon it more than one passing taunt. But at the time, vigilant as he was to seize every foothold for attacking Mr. Gladstone's Government, he neglected this large opportunity. His silence finds an explanation in the following curious letter to Sir Henry Wolff, written, be it remembered, at a time when England was ringing with denunciations of Boer 'treachery' in the 'massacre' at Bronker's Spruit: — 1880 Æt. 31

University Club: December 27, 1880.

I attach the greatest importance to this news from South Africa, and am of opinion that the question of reducing the Boers will divide the Liberal party by a sharper and more insuperable line than any Irish question. The arguments that formerly were of force for the annexation of the Transvaal, can no longer be used with effect. The Zulus are broken, and Secocoeni and his tribe gone, and there is no danger of a native irruption into Natal. The Boers, on the other hand, cannot be said to have ever ceased to be an independent nationality, and are showing now their perfect fitness to take care of themselves.

Your natural and marvellous ingenuity will show you how the strength of this position may be developed. Courtney, if he decides to oppose the 'coercion' of the Boers, will have a great following of Liberals and the entire Irish party. The Fourth Party are individually and collectively unpledged to the annexation of the Transvaal, and it occurs to me one of us (like a thunderbolt in a clear sky) should on the Address pronounce for the independence of the Boers, and protest against British blood and treasure being wasted in reducing a gallant nationality which is perfectly able to take care of itself, taking into consideration the immense difficulties which beset the Home Government in Ireland, the East of Europe, Afghanistan, and Basutoland. Think

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this over in your 'anxious mind,' and consider the numerous advantageous features which the position offers.

Sir Henry Wolff was not to be persuaded into such a course. He reminded his friend of the events of 1857, when Palmerston, confronted on the China War by an adverse majority of Radicals and Conservatives, raised the cry of the 'Honour of England,' dissolved Parliament, and was returned to power by 'a rattling majority.' His counsels prevailed, and the thunderbolt remained unexpended; but the sentiments expressed by Lord Randolph, although partly concealed under the form of partisan tactics, are not to be mistaken. And even the forecast that 'the question of reducing the Boers will divide the Liberal party by a sharper and more insuperable line than any Irish question' was in the end to prove not wholly unfounded. His opinions seem to have been strengthened by time, and ten years later, when he visited South Africa, Lord Randolph wrote [1]: —

'The surrender of the Transvaal and the peace concluded by Mr. Gladstone with the victors of Majuba Hill were at the time, and still are, the object of sharp criticism and bitter denunciation from many politicians at home — *quorum pars parva fui.* Better and more precise information, combined with cool reflection, leads me to the conclusion that had the British Government of that day taken advantage of its strong military position and annihilated, as it could easily have done, the Boer forces, it would indeed have regained the Transvaal, but it would have

[1] *Men, Mines, and Animals in South Africa*, p. 23.

lost Cape Colony. . . . The actual magnanimity of the peace with the Boers concluded by Mr. Gladstone's Ministry after two humiliating military reverses suffered by the arms under their control became plainly apparent to the just and sensible mind of the Dutch Cape Colonist, atoned for much of past grievance, and demonstrated the total absence in the English mind of any hostility or unfriendliness to the Dutch race. Concord between Dutch and English in the Colony from that moment became possible.'

Lord Randolph could not foresee in 1891 the Raid of 1896 or the greater catastrophe that lay behind it. Yet the forces which produced both were steadily, though subterraneously, at work; and the Jameson incursion — surprising, detached, eccentric though it appeared at the time — was itself only one vicious consequence of a fatal past.

Let us return to the session of 1881.

Before Parliament met it was known that Ministers had prepared a Coercion Bill and that the Houses were summoned to meet as early as the first week in January for the express purpose of passing it. But the nature of the powers for which Mr. Forster would ask, was a well-guarded secret. The Fourth Party took counsel together betimes. Lord Randolph proposed that they should move an amendment limiting the duration of the Act to one year. The plan was audacious. It would have enabled all the forces opposed to the Government — from whatever cause — the Irish Nationalists, the Conservative party, the dissentient Radicals and Liberals, to vote together. The

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passage of the Bill must have been rendered more difficult and protracted than ever. And as in all probability Mr. Gladstone would have had to submit to a yearly limit as a compromise, the whole grim business must have been undertaken again in the next session, after hanging like a sword over the Government in the intervening months. On the other hand, it was a dangerous policy for a Conservative party of law and order to adopt. The matter was long debated by the four partners. It was at length decided to consult Lord Beaconsfield; and Mr. Gorst, entrusted with this mission, laid the plan before him on the last day of December 1880. Lord Beaconsfield at first seemed not at all unfavourable. He listened attentively, and acknowledged the idea to be shrewd and good. He asked for time to consider it and promised to send a definite answer in a few days. On the eve of the session the four friends dined together in state and, as no negative reply had arrived, Lord Randolph was full of hope that his plan would be adopted by the official leaders of the Conservative party. Great was his disappointment when the next day Lord Beaconsfield decided that the proposal, however good in itself as a Parliamentary manœuvre, was not practicable for a Conservative Opposition.

The Fourth Party accepted Lord Beaconsfield's decision as final; not so Lord Randolph. He had manufactured what he called 'political dynamite.' He knew it to be deadly. With or without Lord Beaconsfield's approval, he was prepared to go on. But he failed to persuade the others and in the process their

disagreement developed into a regular quarrel. He seems at length to have been prevailed on by his father to give up the idea and, although he said (February 4) in debate that he was very strongly in favour of the Act being allowed to expire in 1882, by which time the Coercion measures of the Government, coupled with their remedial legislation, should have pacified the country, no such amendment ever appeared on the order paper. But for the first three months of the session of 1881 the Fourth Party, greatly to the satisfaction of the Government, practically ceased to exist as a political force or even as a friendly association. Not until the renewal of the Bradlaugh debates was their comradeship restored. 1881 ÆT. 32

The Queen's Speech of 1880 had contained only a passing reference to Ireland and the intention of the Government to rule without exceptional legislation. The Queen's Speech of 1881 referred to little else but Ireland and the intention of the Government to adopt measures of Coercion. The course of the session followed the lines of the gracious speech. Ireland monopolised attention. Coercion Bills were forced through the House of Commons in the teeth of frantic Nationalist opposition. Scenes and suspensions were the order of the day. A forty-one hours' sitting was terminated only by the arbitrary and extraordinary intervention of the Speaker. New rules of procedure, lopping off Parliamentary liberties cherished for ages, were devised. The Land Bill took four months to pass. Armed

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with his new powers, which enabled him to lock up everyone and anyone he pleased, Mr. Forster swept several hundred alleged 'village ruffians' into Kilmainham, where they lived together in great comfort, consulted freely, received visits from their friends, transacted their business, and even wrote letters to the newspapers. They thus achieved cheaply-won martyrdom, often crowned with Parliamentary honours, and their places were eagerly filled by others. The land agitation increased in vehemence and outrages in number. The measure, to obtain which so much had been sacrificed, proved utterly futile.

Through all this turmoil Lord Randolph pursued his wayward course alone. After the Speaker's *coup d'état* (February 2) he spoke in support of the Nationalist motion for adjournment, because, as he said, 'one section of the House was greatly irritated, another section greatly fatigued, and a third greatly alarmed' by what had happened. On this Mr. Balfour at once declared his intention of voting with Sir Stafford Northcote in the Government Lobby, though he contrived to defend Lord Randolph from the criticisms which his speech drew upon him from the highly strained nerves and tempers of the forces of law and order. On the 4th Lord Randolph spoke on the first of the Coercion measures — the Protection of Persons and Property Bill.

'I support this Bill,' he said, 'with reluctance and distrust. I am confident that a proper and vigorous administration of the ordinary law last summer and last autumn would have saved us from

this Bill. I cannot with satisfaction entrust extraordinary powers to a Minister who has proved unequal to the administration of the ordinary law of the land. I know that those powers require to be administered with firmness and decision. The more these qualities abound, the sooner the necessity for extraordinary powers will cease; but I fear that we shall have indecision and timidity and consequently injustice and protracted Coercion.' 1881 ÆT. 32

On the 15th he supported an amendment to provide every person arrested under the new Acts with a copy of the warrant and a statement of the crime or crimes of which he was suspected, making at the same time a contemptuous reference to 'members who still called themselves Liberals, while they supported a Bill for the suspension of the liberties of the Irish people.' On the 16th he voted for an amendment providing that persons arrested on mere suspicion should be treated differently from ordinary prisoners while incarcerated without trial. This was conceded by the Government after much discussion. On the 18th he urged that the arrest of members of Parliament under special legislation should in all cases be reported to the House. Indeed, throughout these discussions his conduct was considered very reprehensible and shocking.

If Mr. Forster's policy was unfortunate, his position, although supported by overwhelming majorities of both great parties, was certainly unenviable. It is hard to cope with revolution; but to attempt to do so without offending the susceptibilities of a Liberal

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Cabinet or a democratic party surpasses the wit and patience of man. The reports which reached him every day from magistrates and police, were alarming. His office table at the Castle was littered with letters of fierce and tragic reproach. Indignant landowners claimed imperiously that protection for life and property which even the basest of civilised Governments have rarely denied. The widow wrote from beside the body of her murdered husband, declaring that his blood was upon the head of the recreant Minister. The country seethed with sedition. Tales of tyranny and terror lacerated the warm heart of the Chief Secretary; and although police and detectives dogged his steps, his life was in constant jeopardy. In Parliament he was the object of frantic and virulent abuse from the Nationalist members. Many Chief Secretaries have faced that form of attack since then. English ears have become accustomed to it — and even deaf to it. But Forster was the first example, and an impression was produced that he was a man specially repugnant to Irish feeling. He was exposed to galling attack from every quarter.

'It is unfortunate for Ireland,' observed Mr. Parnell, 'that the Tories are not now in office. If they were, Parliament would not have seen this measure of Coercion, because in that case the Irish would have had the assistance of the united Whig and Radical parties. We should have had all those platitudes as to the love of liberty which the Liberal party entertain and all those stock phrases which do Liberal Cabinets such good service when they are out

of office. The two great parties are now united, but only for one purpose — namely, to crush, put down, and bully a poor, weak, and starving nation. . . .' But although the Government were supported in their repressive legislation by both parties and openly opposed by scarcely any English or Scottish members, the dissatisfaction against them on both sides of the House grew steadily as the session advanced. The regular Opposition neglected nothing that could discredit the Ministry, whether by accusing them of being responsible for the disorder, or by cavilling at their remedies and pointing out how inconsistent these were with their principles. 1881 Æt. 32

Although he allowed himself to be persuaded against making a hostile motion, Lord Randolph's detestation of the Coercion Bill grew as he watched its course. 'This Bill,' he said (March 11, 1881), 'is now passing away from the House, and with it disappears all that liberty-destroying machinery — urgency, *clôtures*, *coups d'état*, and dictatorships — never, I hope, to return again. We shall now be told to turn our attention to remedial legislation. I make no remark beyond this — that remedial measures which are planted under the shadow of Coercion and watered and nourished by the suspension of the Constitution, must be from their nature poor and sickly plants of foreign origin, almost foredoomed to perish before they begin to grow. It was upon their capacity to give contentment and happiness to Ireland that the Liberals relied to gain for themselves immortal credit and to

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secure a perpetual lease of power. The Chief Secretary went to Ireland in April last, bearing with him the hopes and blessings of an enthusiastic and victorious party. He gave us all to understand that he was to become an emancipator greater even than O'Connell; and within twelve months of office he has come to the House to ask for powers more stringent and more oppressive than were ever granted to or demanded by Lord Castlereagh, the Duke of Wellington, or Lord Grey. I wish the Chief Secretary joy of these beautiful Bills; but I may tell the right honourable gentleman that he has acquired by them the undying dislike and distrust of the Irish people. While I have never denied that some measure of this kind, owing to the conduct of the Government, and that alone, was only too necessary for Ireland — and while I have always admitted that as to the nature and extent of that measure her Majesty's Government, who were the culprits, must be the judges — I still recollect, with unqualified satisfaction, that Coercion is a double-edged weapon and has before now fatally wounded those Administrations which have been compelled by their own folly to have recourse to it.'

Sir William Harcourt, as Home Secretary, was put forward by the Government to reply to this. 'It is difficult,' he said, 'to treat the noble lord the member for Woodstock as a serious politician, or to discover to which of the four parties he belongs. He once belonged to his own — the Fourth Party; but he has managed by his conduct during the discussion of this

Bill to dissolve that minute party; and his feats in that respect only afford a fresh illustration of the infinite divisibility of matter.' Sir William went on to say, amid general approval, that, being no more leader of the Fourth Party, Lord Randolph had become adviser to the Third Party (the Nationalists). 1881 Æt. 32

But, for all that, the undercurrents of disapproval of Ministerial policy flowed ever more strongly in Parliament, and nothing less than Mr. Gladstone's unparalleled authority and skill could have sustained the Irish Secretary through the session. His colleagues in the Cabinet were doubtful, and some actively hostile. There was a feeling of suppressed resentment in the Liberal party against the Minister who had been responsible for forcing them into courses so obnoxious to their principles and so damaging to their reputation. Radicals below the gangway became increasingly outspoken in their attacks. A considerable section of the party press was openly hostile. Under these many anxieties and embarrassments the hair of the Chief Secretary grew visibly grey.

Whatever may have been the demerits of the Land Bill of 1881, it was sufficiently large and effective to threaten to take the agrarian wind out of the sails of the revolutionary movement. Unable to oppose openly a measure which conferred real benefits upon the tenants, Parnell resolved to obstruct its working and to prevent the tenants from resorting to the Land Courts. So soon as this intention was made clear the Government seem to have decided upon his

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arrest. The Prime Minister delivered a preparatory onslaught upon him at Leeds, where he charged the Irish leader with 'standing between the living and the dead — not, like Aaron, to stay the plague, but to spread it'; and he hinted that the resources of civilisation were not exhausted. Parnell replied savagely at Wexford. 'If you are arrested,' inquired apprehensive friends, 'who will take your place?' '"Captain Moonlight" will take my place,' replied Parnell. Two days later he was imprisoned in Kilmainham. In the ten months preceding the Coercion Act (March–December 1880) the number of outrages was 2,379; in the ten months which followed, 3,331. The gravest increase was in crime affecting life. Murders and attempts to murder were more than trebled. The Land League, when suppressed, was replaced by an even more sinister and even less responsible organisation. The failure of Mr. Forster's repressive measures was signal.

The arrest of Mr. Parnell may be regarded as a single exception. As the months slipped by the prisoner at Kilmainham began to grow uneasy. He had regular and perfect information of the state of the country. He found the control of the agitation passing from his hands into those of unknown and desperate people. Captain Moonlight was exercising and delegating his sovereignty. New associations, secret and deadly in their purposes, were sprouting. Parnell required his liberty, and he resolved to treat. Nothing could exceed the satisfaction of the Prime Minister when this was

conveyed to him. The mood of the principals being agreeable, ambassadors were found on both sides to arrange conditions. Upon the basis that no sort of agreement existed, Mr. Gladstone undertook to introduce an Arrears Bill and the Irish leader promised to 'slow down the agitation.' A delighted Cabinet ratified the non-existent bargain. Parnell and his colleagues were released; the Lord-Lieutenant, Earl Cowper, and the Chief Secretary, who remained stubbornly unconvinced, resigned. Such was the Kilmainham Treaty. Parnell, free once more, set to work to gather up the threads of authority. It was too late. He was released on May 2. On the 6th, the day of Earl Spencer's entry as Lord-Lieutenant, Lord Frederick Cavendish, the new Chief Secretary, and Mr. Burke, the Permanent Under-Secretary, were murdered in the Phœnix Park. 1882 Æt. 33

Mr. Forster's political fate was reached with the inexorable precision of Greek tragedy. If ever a good man was overwhelmed with successive waves of adversity, it was he. Called at a moment's notice to an office with which he had no special acquaintance, and confronted with dismal alternatives, he had chosen wrongly at the first. An evil fortune dogged his steps. Had he assumed power a year earlier he might have guarded against the outbreak; a year later he would have been free to stem it without any accusation of responsibility for its cause. As a Tory Chief Secretary he might have achieved a glorious reputation as a Coercionist. As a Liberal Minister he was ruined. His errors of judgment were not small. He was,

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wrote Mr. Gladstone, 'a very impracticable man in a position of great responsibility.' The style and tenor of his letters lend some sanction to this opinion. But, whatever may be thought of his wisdom or, what is of more importance in politics, of his instinct, the courage and integrity which he displayed, command the tribute of all who review, however briefly, his public conduct. What a worthy Englishman might do, he did. No labour wa too exacting; no peril deterred him. He faced obloquy and assassination with equal calmness. He chased away the vigilant guards by whom he was surrounded. Almost alone and unprotected he penetrated the most distracted regions, talking to the people face to face and striving with hopeless optimism to allay by argument the passions of centuries.

'If I had thought,' he said in the House of Commons in introducing his Coercion Bill, 'that this duty would devolve on the Irish Secretary, I would never have held the office; if I could have foreseen that this would have been the result of twenty years' Parliamentary life, I would have left Parliament rather than have undertaken it.' 'If you think,' he wrote to Mr. Gladstone, April 4, 1881, 'that *from any cause* it would be for the advantage of the public service or for the good of Ireland that I should resign, I place my resignation in your hands. You might come to this opinion . . . without any disagreement with my official action; and I earnestly beg of you not to allow yourself to be influenced, for a moment, by any personal consideration for me of any kind whatever. For instance, I

must request you to pay no regard to the fact that I should probably appear discredited — to have failed,' &c., &c. On the morrow of the tragedy in the Phœnix Park he offered to return to Ireland and fill his old place, so speedily made vacant. But the Prime Minister had come to the conclusion that Ireland was no place for his talents or his virtues. He passed for ever out of the Ministry, to become during the rest of the Parliament one of its most dangerous and vigilant opponents. He was neither the first nor the last able man to be crushed between Irish national passions and English party needs. 1882 ÆT. 33

In all these moving events Lord Randolph bore little part. At the beginning of the session of 1882 he was in his place with his three allies, all thoroughly reunited and intent upon the Government's misdeeds. Upon the Address the Fourth Party made a combined attack, in which Mr. Forster was accused, with a good deal of evidence, of having illegally transgressed even the wide limits of executive power which the special legislation had assigned him. On February 21 there was another Bradlaugh scene. The member for Northampton, advancing suddenly to the table, produced a book, said to be a Testament, from his pocket, and duly swore himself upon it, to the consternation of the members. Lord Randolph was the first to recover from the surprise which this act of audacity created. He declared that Mr. Bradlaugh, by the outrage of taking in defiance of the House an oath of a meaningless character upon a book alleged to be a Testament — 'it might have been the "Fruits

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of Philosophy"' — had vacated his seat and should be treated 'as if he were dead.' In moving for a new writ he implored the House to act promptly and vindicate its authority. Mr. Gladstone, however, persuaded both sides to put off the decision till the next day. On the 22nd therefore a debate on privilege ensued. Sir Stafford Northcote merely moved to exclude Mr. Bradlaugh from the precincts of the House, thus modifying Lord Randolph's motion for a new writ. Lord Randolph protested against such 'milk and water' policy and urged the immediate punishment of the offender. After a long discussion, in which the temper of all parties was inflamed by Mr. Bradlaugh's repeated interruptions, Sir Stafford substituted for his simple motion of exclusion a proposal to expel Mr. Bradlaugh from the House; and this being carried the seat for Northampton was thereby vacated.

Lord Randolph seems to have gained much credit in Tory circles for the promptness and energy with which he had acted; but it was to be almost his last intervention in the debates of the session. At the end of February he was afflicted with a long and painful illness and lay in bed — at first at Wimborne House and afterwards at a little cottage near Wimbledon — for nearly five months. His absence was a grievous loss to the Opposition during the Irish crisis. The public announcement that the imprisoned members had been released was accompanied by a well-founded rumour of some political bargain between the Government and Mr. Parnell. Mr. Forster's

explanations exposed the fact that the Kilmainham negotiations, whatever their nature, had been conducted independently of the Irish Secretary by Mr. Chamberlain. Upon all this came the terrible news of the murders in the Phœnix Park. The new Minister, 'an innocent man' even to the fiercest Fenians, a man honoured and liked by all who knew him, the envoy of peace and reconciliation, was stabbed to death on the very day of his landing. The excitement throughout England was tremendous. After the dead had been buried with every circumstance of national grief and indignation the 'Kilmainham Treaty' came under pitiless review. The Fourth Party headed the attack. They pointed out Mr. Chamberlain as the mysterious 'Number One' of the Fenian inner circle; and Mr. Balfour, speaking with altogether unexpected power, denounced the 'Kilmainham Treaty' as 'an infamy.' This was the first speech he ever made that commanded general attention, or gave any promise of his future distinction. So intense was the feeling in the House that it was freely stated, and acknowledged even on the Liberal benches, that had Lord Randolph Churchill been at hand to strike the blow the Government might have fallen. 1882 ÆT. 33

It was not until the autumn that he was strong enough to return to the House of Commons. Irish obstruction had reached its inevitable conclusion; and Parliament was assembled for a renewal of the session at the end of October to effect a drastic revision in its procedure. Mr. Gladstone's 'new

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rules' were ingenious and comprehensive. All sorts of liberties and privileges of debate were ruthlessly lopped off or deformed in the attempt to destroy the abuses by which they had been encumbered. There were restrictions upon dilatory motions of all kinds and devices for checking irrelevance or repetition in debate; but the Closure — *clôture*, as its opponents called it with elaborate foreign accent — was the most formidable instrument upon which the Government relied. Into the discussion of all these grave and novel questions Lord Randolph threw himself with a recuperated strength. The members had no sooner met together than he was in possession of the House with a constitutional protest — based on precedents going back to 'the ninth year of King Henry the Fourth' — against the impropriety of taking Government business after the Appropriation Act for the year had been passed. And thenceforward, late and early, on small matters and on great, he and his nimble friends were the tyrants of debate.

Before the session was a week old it was everywhere admitted that the whole conduct and temper of the Opposition had undergone a change and that that change was intimately connected with Lord Randolph's return. Mr. Gladstone had barely had time to offer him some courteous congratulations upon his recovery when they were engaged together in the liveliest of disputes. He contrived over and over again, by repeated allusions to the 'Kilmainham Treaty' (an expression which Mr. Gladstone always regarded with extreme disfavour), or to the course of

affairs in Egypt (to which reference will presently be made), to provoke the Prime Minister into indignant declamation. He jeered at the Liberal party — who had been exhorted by their Whips not to take too much part in the discussion — 'for assisting in the capacity of mutes at the funeral obsequies of free speech.' Irritated by various motions for adjournment upon Irish and Egyptian affairs, the supporters of the Ministry covered the notice paper with 'blocking notices,' then a newly discovered device, relating to almost every conceivable subject. Lord Randolph deliberately described these as 'bogus motions put down to prevent discussion of *bona-fide* motions.' 'Oh!' said Mr. Labouchere, much shocked, 'I move that those words be taken down.' 'I second that,' rejoined Lord Randolph instantly, and forthwith proceeded to repeat the expression. The usual squabbles, unavoidable perhaps — certainly not very earnestly avoided — soon sprang up between the solemn elders of the Front Opposition Bench and the clever energetic men who impelled them forward while they were supposed to follow. One night Mr. Gibson voted against an amendment, proposed by the Fourth Party, to prevent the debate on motions for adjournment being confined solely to the question of whether the House should or should not adjourn. When, on the very next day, the restricting rule having been passed with his concurrence, he was himself called to order for breaking it, Lord Randolph's joy was unconcealed.

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But a more serious difference arose on the question

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of the closure. Lord Randolph Churchill wished the Conservative party to meet this with an utterly uncompromising resistance. He wrote (November 4) a fiery letter to the *Times* urging the Opposition, under the euphonious phrase of making 'a determined use of the rights of Parliamentary minorities,' to bring about a dead-lock before their powers were for ever destroyed by the new rules, and so to force Mr. Gladstone to appeal to the country against a Conservative cry of 'freedom of speech for the Commons.' 'It is not altogether astonishing,' observed the *Times* (November 6), 'that the prospect of fighting a stout battle with ten times as many followers as Mr. Parnell ever commanded should have a fascination for the ardent spirit of Lord Randolph Churchill.' The leaders of the Conservative party, however, resolved to assume a temperate and reasonable manner in the hopes of obtaining larger concessions from the Government. In this praiseworthy spirit Mr. Gibson moved an amendment, not challenging the principle of the closure, but requiring the vote of two-thirds of those present to make it operative. Lord Randolph delivered on this occasion (November 1) one of those speeches by which his Parliamentary reputation was established. At the moment it commanded absolutely the attention of the House and its conclusions have been sustained by the practice of all the years that have followed.

'The *clôture*,' he said, 'has been called an innovation — a foreign practice — but it appears to me that a proportionate majority, or what is called a

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two-thirds *clôture*, is a much greater innovation than the *clôture* itself, and is absolutely foreign to all our principles, ideas, or customs. I know of nothing in the history of this country, or in its laws, or in its Constitution, which can be adduced as a precedent or as an analogy for the proposal in the amendment that the House should require two-thirds of its members to affirm any proposition. We do not require proportionate majorities for the election of our representatives, nor would any proposition to that effect have the slightest chance of being accepted by the country. London, Manchester, Liverpool, Birmingham, and Glasgow can return members to this House for a period of seven years by simple majorities, and the member so returned is as fully and as firmly the member of that constituency as if he had been elected unanimously. And I think that the election of a member for a great constituency for a period of seven years is a much more important matter and would seem to require a much stronger title, than the closing of an occasional debate in the House of Commons. We know, moreover, that many of the greatest reforms in our laws have been carried by majorities which did not number double figures; and it is undoubtedly, in theory, in the power of Parliament, by a majority of one, to change the Constitution of this country from a monarchy into a republic — which, again, I should say, would be a much more important matter than the closing of an occasional debate. I own I am a firm believer in the general infallibility of simple majorities: they have practically

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governed the British Empire from time immemorial; and I must express my surprise that the Tory party, or the Constitutional party, which recoils with horror from the Radical innovation of the *clôture*, should propose with eagerness, with anxiety, almost with desperation, the much greater Radical innovation of a two-thirds majority. . . .

'I imagine that many of those who support this amendment are animated by a secret conviction that the palmy days of Tory government are over, and that the Tory party have nothing to look forward to but a long period of endless opposition, perhaps occasionally chequered by little glimpses of office with a minority. I believe that view to be not only incorrect, but absurdly incorrect. That it is held by many I have no doubt, and those who hold it propose by this amendment to build, as it were, a little dyke, behind which they fancy that they will be able to shelter themselves for a long time to come. A more hopeless delusion never before led astray a political party. How many times does anyone in this House think that the present Prime Minister would permit the Tory party to refuse him the necessary two-thirds majority for getting on with his business? I think he might allow it twice, perhaps three times; but, as sure as he sits there, after the third time, he would come down to this House and declare that the state of public business was deplorable, that the session was one of discomfort and disaster, and that the two-thirds majority must be exchanged for a simple majority; and within

a fortnight or three weeks from the date of that declaration this precious little dyke, which was to shelter the Tory party for a long time to come, this little exotic which was so carefully introduced, nurtured, and protected so that the Tory party might repose under its shade, would be abolished, cut down, and swept away into the great dustbin of all modern constitutional checks. The best protection, the best constitutional check against a Liberal Minister which the Tory party can look to is the House of Lords; yet how often does the House of Lords, with its centuries of prescription, with all its vast territorial influence, venture to stand in the way of a Liberal majority? And yet, with this historic caution, not to say timidity, on the part of the House of Lords in your minds, and before your eyes, does anyone really seriously imagine that this wretched device, this miserable safeguard of a two-thirds majority, could for one moment arrest the tide of popular reform, a safeguard compared with which Don Quixote's helmet was a miracle of protection, or Mrs. Partington's mop a monster of energy and strength? 1882 ÆT. 33

'But let us look a little further ahead. No one will deny that there are great and burning questions coming on rapidly for settlement — questions relating to the franchise and to the representation of the people — questions relating to the revenue and to trade — questions relating to the land and agriculture — questions affecting the relations between Great Britain and Ireland. Is the Tory party prepared — is it determined — to abdicate and renounce all title to the

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initiative of legislation on these great questions? Is the attitude of the great Tory Democracy, which Lord Beaconsfield's party constructed, to be one of mere dogged opposition? And is it true, what our foes say of us, that Coercion for Ireland and foreign war is to be the 'be-all and the end-all' of Tory Ministries? I think not; and yet it is on the ability, and not only on the ability, but on the rapidity, with which, in the face of unscrupulous opposition, you may be able to legislate on these questions that your title to power and that your tenure of office will mainly depend. Nevertheless, here you are, under the influence of an Hibernian legal mind, elaborately and laboriously endeavouring to forge for yourselves an instrument which, if you do come into office, will paralyse you so effectually that your power will be as tottering as a house of cards, your tenure of office as evanescent as a summer's day. No, sir, oppose the *clôture* if you will; defeat it if you can; resort for that purpose, if you have the courage, to all those forms and privileges which a Parliamentary minority still possesses, in order, if possible, to compel the Prime Minister to abandon his project, or to appeal to the country to decide between you and him; but, whatever you do, for Heaven's sake do not be seduced by interested counsels into following foreign fancies, and do not be persuaded by any desire to think only of the moment, and to disembarrass yourselves of all care for what is to come.'

There was great discontent among the Conservative party at this speech. Its force was undeniable,

and the members recognised reluctantly and uneasily that they had been led, in support of a vicious compromise, on to ground equally unsuited for defence or attack. All the more were they inclined to resent the proof of their leaders' unwisdom. Mr. Balfour lost no time in making it clear that he disagreed with Lord Randolph Churchill, and when he rose next day to renew the debate he declared himself definitely in favour of the principle of the two-thirds majority to enforce the Closure. Mr. Goschen had praised Lord Randolph's arguments and Mr. Balfour, after alluding to the 'portentous coalition between a discontented Whig and an independent Tory,' devoted his speech entirely to refuting them. In this he was, according to Sir Stafford Northcote, very successful. 'My noble friend, the member for Woodstock,' said the leader of the Opposition naïvely, 'has somehow or other managed to elevate himself into a position from which he finds himself capable of looking down on the Front Benches on both sides and of regarding all parties in the House of Commons with an impartiality which is quite sublime. I do not know what can have taken my noble friend into such heights, or whether he went there to consult the angel Gabriel, or, what is sometimes suspected, to look for the lost principles of the Liberal party — some of which have gone to the planet Saturn and some to the planet Mars — but, whatever may have become of them, his argument seems to me to have been completely answered by the honourable member for Hertford, who sits near him, and I do not think it necessary to

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dwell further upon it. It certainly seems to me that my noble friend has overlooked, from the great heights from which he regards these matters, the real importance of those safeguards which he treats as little lights which would be very quickly swept away. I can only say that if he is right, and if they would be quickly swept away, we would not be in a worse position than if we never had them at all.'

Even this rejoinder could not sustain the fortunes of the debate. The division showed how ill-conceived the Opposition tactics had been. The Irish party, who naturally looked upon a Closure which required a two-thirds majority as a device specially directed against them, voted in a body against the amendment. The Whigs were somewhat divided, but the greater number followed Mr. Goschen into the Government lobby. The Fourth Party, consisting of three persons, abstained. Mr. Gibson's amendment was therefore defeated by 322 to 288, or nearly double the majority that had been generally expected. Thus, against their will and in spite of their leaders, the Conservative party became possessed of that great engine of government by which during nearly twenty years of power they were to silence and overcome their political opponents.

Ever since then, obstruction and Closure have struggled against each other in a warfare which has respected no neutral boundaries and recognised no public law. Scarcely any Parliamentary custom or privilege has escaped their joint depredations. Every device or formality designed in the careful wisdom of

former ages to safeguard the rights of a minority has been recklessly exploited by the one faction and ruthlessly demolished by the other. The historic procedure of the House of Commons has been reduced to the rigid framework which had hitherto served a purpose only in Continental or Colonial imitations. The whole theatre of war has been devastated. Almost everything within the range of the combatants that was destructible has perished — and has perished beyond repair. So long as the House of Commons contains no body of opinion which, because more or less independent of party organisations, is capable of being won or estranged by argument or conduct, the vicious conflict must run its appointed course. The end is, however, in sight. The majority must prevail. An elaborate and comprehensive time-table, fixed no doubt with some impartiality, may soon assign immovable limits to all debate. The victory of Closure will be complete. Obstruction will disappear through being at once unnecessary and impossible. But the remedy may prove more painful than the disease and the strength and reality of representative institutions may very easily disappear as well. Certain it is that if the House of Commons is ever to regain its vanished freedom and to preserve its vanishing authority, it will be by new and original treatment and not by belated attempts to revive the systems of the past. A larger and more generous freedom in choosing the subjects to be discussed might compensate for the mechanical regulation of the time allotted to

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discussion. The delegation of financial and legislative detail to Committees, and the devolution upon local, provincial, or national bodies of much contentious business proper to their respective jurisdictions, would abundantly increase the total time available. And perhaps those more complicated but more scientific methods of Parliamentary election, generally described as 'Proportional Representation,' will some day secure that detached, august, impartial element in British councils whose influence and favour all factions would strive to win.

Lord Beaconsfield's death early in the year 1881 had been a heavy blow to the Fourth Party. Great men at the height of their power often, to their cost, refuse to recognise the ability of new comers. Peel had scorned Disraeli. Gladstone never understood Mr. Chamberlain's capacity till he faced him as a foe. Smaller persons, called from time to time to the conduct of public affairs, exhibit the same failing in an aggravated degree with greater regularity and more disastrous results to themselves. The jealousy and dislike with which the leaders of the Conservative party in the House of Commons regarded the activities of Lord Randolph and his friends, had been apparent even before the session of 1880 had come to an end. From all such feelings Lord Beaconsfield was free. His character and the hard experiences of his earlier years made him seek eagerly for the first signs of oncoming power. He was an old man lifted high above his contemporaries and he liked to look past them to the new generation

and to feel that he could gain the sympathy and confidence of younger men. If he liked youth, he liked Tory Democracy even more. He had, moreover, good reason to know how a Parliamentary Opposition should be conducted. He saw with perfect clearness the incapacity above the gangway and the enterprise and pluck below it. Had his life been prolonged for a few more years the Fourth Party might have marched, as his Young Guard, by a smoother road, and this story might have reached a less melancholy conclusion. He stood above personal rivalries. He was removed from the petty vexations of the House of Commons. Surely he would not have allowed these clever ardent men to drift into antagonism against the mass of the Conservative party and into fierce feud with its leaders. He alone could have kept their loyalty, as he alone commanded their respect; and never would he have countenanced the solemn excommunication by dulness and prejudice of all that preserved the sparkling life of Toryism in times of depression and defeat. But Lord Beaconsfield was gone; and those whom he had left behind had other views of how his inheritance — such as it was — should be divided.

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CHAPTER V

ELIJAH'S MANTLE

'Great men are not always wise: neither do the aged understand judgment.' — Job. xxxii. 9.

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For nearly three eventful years Mr. Gladstone's Administration had held power. In the country the popularity and prestige of the great Minister were still immense. His authority was as unquestioned by the rank and file of his party as on the morrow of the Midlothian triumph. He was still 'the people's William' to the crowd. But in Parliament and in the Cabinet difficulties had arisen which scarcely any other leader could have stemmed. Bradlaugh, Majuba, Kilmainham, were names full of gloomy significance to the Liberal party, that promised renewed vexation and discredit in the future. Colleagues had dropped off one by one. Lord Lansdowne had left the Government as early as the Compensation for Disturbance Bill. The Irish Land Act had cost the Prime Minister the Duke of Argyll. Mr. Forster had fallen rather than consent to the release of Parnell. A new question was at hand, opening a broad indefinite vista of embarrassment and disaster and involving at the outset a far more serious secession.

The gradual withdrawal of European Powers and final retreat of France left Great Britain alone to confront the growing anarchy in Egypt. A medley of conflicting impulses and incidents — moral obligations, material interests, the Suez Canal, the coupons of the Egyptian debt, Arabi's national movement and the massacre of June — culminated in the bombardment of Alexandria on July 11, 1882, by the British fleet. Mr. Bright resigned from the Cabinet; but the House of Commons broke into general cheering at the news and only eight Radicals testified to their principles by their votes. Large military operations followed. Twenty-five thousand British soldiers descended upon Egypt. Arabi and his national movement were stamped out under the heavy heel of the British Grenadier and England became responsible for the fortunes of the Nile Valley. 1882–1883

Their intervention was to carry the Government further than they expected. The misrule which had produced in Egypt the national movement of Arabi had created the rebellion of the Mahdi in the Soudan. The inhabitants of vast regions were aflame with military fury and religious fervour. Yusef Pasha had been overwhelmed. The army of General Hicks was being collected for its fatal effort. The Khedival garrisons were everywhere cut off and besieged. Khartoum almost alone was accessible from the north. Inch by inch and hour by hour the Liberal Government was dragged deeper and deeper into the horrible perplexities of the Egyptian riddle and the Soudan tragedy. At each detested step they resolved

1882–1883 to go no further. Every act of interference was to be their last. Every day they looked forward to an early evacuation. To get out of the country in the shortest possible time and upon any conceivable justification was their constant and controlling desire; and after every struggle to escape they found themselves more hopelessly and inextricably involved.

To Lord Randolph Churchill the whole policy of intervention seemed a flagrant political blunder and a crowning violation of Liberal principles. He had sympathised from the beginning with the revolt of Arabi Pasha. He subscribed fifty pounds to the expenses of his defence before the Egyptian Court Martial. He believed that the popular soldier and Minister had been the head of a real national movement directed against one of the vilest and most worthless Governments in the world. That England should use her power to stamp out that movement, to crush the army which sustained it, to banish the leader on whom all depended and to hand back the wretched Egyptians to the incapacity of Tewfik and the extortions of his creditors, was to him an odious crime. The war was — in his eyes — a wicked war, an unjust war, 'a bondholders' war.' And as he felt, so he spoke. While the fighting was actually in progress criticism was necessarily ineffective; but at the beginning of 1883 the excitement of Tel-el-Kebir and Kassassin had begun to subside and Egyptian affairs became a leading subject of Parliamentary debate.

While these embarrassments preoccupied the Ministry, the Conservative Opposition was disturbed by

questions of leadership. Who was to be Lord Beaconsfield's successor? Sir Stafford Northcote, as the leader in the House of Commons, seemed to have the most natural and formal claims. Lord Salisbury had not then obtained any large measure of public confidence. He was generally regarded as representing a form of Toryism highly orthodox and respectable in principle, but rather too rampant and unyielding for the practical necessities of the political situation. The epigrams and epithets which slipped so easily from his tongue and pen had won him the reputation of being rash and violent by nature. His comparison of Lord Derby to Titus Oates was not soon forgotten; and, for all the respect in which his character was held, Disraeli's celebrated description of him had gained a very wide acceptance. Even in the House of Lords there had been at first some doubt as to his leadership. Lord Cairns, the Duke of Richmond and the Duke of Marlborough seem all at times to have been considered as safer alternatives. Since his authority had been conceded or asserted in the Upper Chamber some mistakes in tactics had been made, and Lord Salisbury was thought on more than one occasion to have committed his party further in resistance to Liberal legislation than its strength warranted. For two years, however, the leadership of the party as a whole had been in commission. A kind of 'dual control' had been jointly exerted by the leaders in both houses. Between Sir Stafford Northcote and Lord Salisbury the most pleasant personal relations prevailed and it will be shown in

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1881–1883 this account that they behaved to each other, in many difficult and delicate circumstances, with unquestionable loyalty. At the same time the great prize and honour of supreme control, with its almost certain reversion of the Premiership, lay between them, and only one could win it. As very often happens in such circumstances, the good faith and good feeling observed between the principals did not extend to their respective supporters; and Lord Salisbury's excellent relations with Sir Stafford Northcote did not prevent the growth of two sulky and jealous factions to support their rival claims.

The Fourth Party stood for a long time apart from these activities and were individually divided as to the course to take. Mr. Balfour's opinion was from the outset clear; and his evident wish that Lord Salisbury, and not Sir Stafford Northcote, should head the Conservative party may have been his chief reason for associating himself with the free-lances below the gangway. Mr. Gorst, on the other hand, was much more friendly to Sir Stafford Northcote. He did not altogether agree with Lord Randolph Churchill in his very adverse estimate of Sir Stafford Northcote's qualities and capacity as a Parliamentary leader, which is generally reflected in these pages. Between these two choices Lord Randolph seems long to have hung in doubt. He was much disquieted by several of Lord Salisbury's actions in the House of Lords, which seemed to indicate an attitude of uncompromising resistance to democratic legislation. On the other hand, the Fourth Party came into constant

disagreement with Sir Stafford Northcote in the House of Commons, and chafed keenly under his guidance. 1882 Æt. 33

The evils of the 'dual control' were increasingly displayed as time went by. The Arrears Bill in 1882 ended in the complete collapse of the Opposition in both Houses. Lord Salisbury was for rejecting it in the House of Lords on the second reading and courting a dissolution. In this course he was supported by an enthusiastic meeting of Peers at his house in Arlington Street. The leaders in the Commons dissuaded him from such an extreme measure. It was agreed that the Bill should not be rejected, but materially amended, and that the amendments should be fought for at all risks. Lord Salisbury accordingly amended the Bill in the House of Lords. But Sir Stafford and his friends in the Commons failed to support him with the necessary vigour. A division of opinion grew rapidly in the Conservative ranks. At a time when union and decision were both vital to the success of the operations, neither was to be found. No great effort was made to rally the party in the House of Commons. Grave doubts were expressed as to the wisdom of provoking a conflict between the two Houses. The word 'dissolution' seemed full of evil omen. Only 157 Conservatives out of 242 voted in the decisive division for the Lords' amendments and they were defeated by the crushing majority of 136. The panic spread to the House of Lords. Lord Salisbury, deserted by the Peers, was left in a very ignominious position; and, in spite of the definite arrangement on which he had acted, the

1883 party Press resounded with praise of Sir Stafford's
Æt. 34 prudence and blame of Lord Salisbury's rashness. The need of a single supreme leader was, through the occurrence of such incidents, very widely recognised at the beginning of 1883; but whether Lord Salisbury or Sir Stafford Northcote should be chosen was still a matter of doubt and controversy. The prevailing opinion inclined strongly towards Sir Stafford Northcote.

Lord Randolph began the session of 1883 in great activity, and the Fourth Party, with or without the assistance of Mr. Balfour, was prominent, if not predominant, in almost every Parliamentary event. As a leader of free-lances, Lord Randolph was for ever seeking for a chance to drive a wedge into the Ministerial array. To split the Government majority by raising some issue on which conscientious Radicals would be forced to vote against their leaders, or, failing that, by some question on which the Minister concerned would be likely to utter illiberal sentiments, and bound to justify a policy or a system which the Liberal party detested, was his perpetual and almost instinctive endeavour. Such had been his method during the debates on Irish Coercion; it was his plan upon 'Parliamentary procedure'; it would have been his course, had he not been dissuaded therefrom, in regard to the suppression of the Boer revolt; it was afterwards to be his attitude in much greater degree upon the unending tangles of affairs in Egypt. If the tactics he pursued were adroit, the sentiments he expressed were

congenial. Alike from conviction and partisanship he was drawn continually to the more Radical view of political disputes. No one understood better than he the difficulties with which Mr. Gladstone had to contend, or the stresses which paralysed the Cabinet and racked the Liberal party. 1883 ÆT. 34

'You are no doubt aware,' he told a Manchester audience (December 1, 1881), 'of a curious fact in natural history — that there is an animal more useful than picturesque, generally to be found in our farmyards, which cannot swim. Owing to its ungraceful conformation, whenever it is called upon to swim, it cuts its own throat with its feet; and the spectacle of the Radical party attempting to govern reminds me irresistibly of that animal trying to swim. The Radical party are prevented from governing by what they are pleased to call their principles; and in the act of governing they invariably commit suicide. They are unable to govern Ireland because it was by stimulating disorder that they attained power. They were unable to suppress the revolt of the Boers, because it is their most sacred principle that any portion of the Empire must be sacrificed rather than that they should incur the charge of "blood-guiltiness." They were unable to retain the valuable possession of Candahar, which had been gained at a cost of eighteen millions, because another of their most sacred principles is that we must rely on "moral barriers." Their Government is without an ally in Europe because this is their diplomatic maxim — that foreign policy is nothing more than an alternate

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succession of insults and apologies. They are unable to conclude a treaty of commerce, vital though it be to this country, because they have gratuitously tied themselves down to the fetish of limiting Customs duties to six articles of foreign import. So you see, gentlemen, that whenever they attempt to move in the ordinary paths of government one of these so-called principles immediately rises up, paralyses their action, and makes them an object either of mockery or of compassion.'

He took a grim delight in compelling the Under Secretary for the Colonies — 'this humanitarian Minister' — and even Mr. Gladstone himself, to defend or palliate the use of dynamite by the Boers in their warfare with the natives. When Mr. Evelyn Ashley was stung by much sarcastic comment into condemning 'the ill-regulated impulses of humanity' which appeared to prompt the Opposition attack, Lord Randolph replied that he had passed the gravest censure on the Prime Minister, whose whole career had consisted in giving way to such 'ill-regulated impulses' and persuading the nation to agree with him. Now, as always, he was an economist. He subjected the Civil Service Estimates to an unremitting scrutiny. The repair of Royal Palaces, the up-keep of the Royal Mews and Parks, formed the subject of protracted debate. He attacked the Royal Buckhounds — ''Arry's Hounds,' as he called them — and declared that only a Cockney who did not know the difference between a field of oats and a field of wheat, and no true sportsman, would take part in

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ATHWART THE COURSE.

R-ND-LPH CH-RCH-LL (*an aggravating Boy*): 'In the way again! 'ooray!!'

Punch, July 7, 1883.

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the pursuit of a tame animal kept in captivity for the purpose of being hunted over and over again. Against such criticisms the Liberal Ministers could furnish no reply satisfactory to their own supporters.

Some of Lord Randolph's maxims in Opposition are well known. He is often credited with, though he cannot rightly claim, the authorship of the phrase, 'The duty of an Opposition is to oppose.' Lord Salisbury condemned early in 1883 'the temptation, strong to many politicians, to attempt to gain the victory by bringing into the Lobby men whose principles were divergent, and whose combined forces therefore could not lead to any wholesome victory.' 'Excellent moralising,' observed Lord Randolph, 'very suitable to the digestions of country delegates, but one of those Puritanical theories which party leaders are prone to preach on a platform, which has never guided for any length of time the action of politicians in the House of Commons, and which, whenever apparently put into practice, invariably results in weak and inane proceedings. Discriminations between wholesome and unwholesome victories are idle and impracticable. Obtain the victory, know how to follow it up, and leave the wholesomeness or unwholesomeness to critics.' His second maxim was as follows: 'Take office only when it suits you, but put the Government in a minority whenever you decently can'; and his third, 'Whenever by an unfortunate concurrence of circumstances an Opposition is compelled to support the Government, the support should

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be given with a kick and not with a caress and should be withdrawn on the first available moment.'

Lord Randolph always declared that in such things he was sustained by the example of Mr. Disraeli. In 1852 Mr. Disraeli put Lord John Russell in a minority by allying himself with Lord Palmerston. In 1857 he put Lord Palmerston in a minority by allying himself with Mr. Gladstone and the Radical party. In 1858 he put Lord Palmerston in a second minority by following the lead of Mr. Milner Gibson and the Radicals. In 1866 Mr. Disraeli, with the assistance of Lord Cranborne, placed Mr. Gladstone in a minority by allying himself with the Whigs. Again, in 1873 Mr. Disraeli placed Mr. Gladstone in a minority by making a temporary alliance with the Radicals and with the Irish. Fortified by these examples, the leader of Tory Democracy pursued his devious and unexpected course, to the bewilderment of his friends and the discomfiture of his foes.

The chronic friction between the Front Opposition Bench and the corner seat below the gangway developed in the first few weeks of the session of 1883 a considerable degree of heat. Lord Randolph's opinion of the worthies at the head of his party was not good, and the efforts which he made to conceal it, were not apparent. They complained of the irritating laugh with which he would sometimes mark his dissent from their tactics. He spoke of them collectively in private as 'the old gang.' One by one he fastened upon them nicknames which

clung like burrs. Sir Stafford Northcote had always been 'the Goat.' Mr. W. H. Smith and Sir R. Cross were described as 'Marshall and Snelgrove.' Mr. Gibson was 'the family solicitor of the Tory party.' The smoking-room of the House of Commons was always laughing over some new witticism or sharp saying, faithfully carried by mischief-makers from one to another till it reached its final destination and roused the wrath of the potentate concerned. But while in his conversation Lord Randolph was scarcely restrained by the limits of decorum, he remained himself perfectly unapproachable. No man dared to take any liberties with him, and party officials or ex-Ministers who addressed themselves to him found themselves confronted by a suave and formal courtesy through which it was impossible to break. 1883 Æt. 34

A sharp and open difference with Sir Stafford Northcote grew early in March out of some small incident of House of Commons tactics:—

Sir Stafford Northcote to Lord Randolph Churchill.

Private. House of Commons: March 9, 1883.

Dear Lord Randolph, — I understand that a good many of our friends are annoyed at the appearance of a kind of *communiqué* in the morning papers yesterday to the effect that if I were to move the adjournment of the House (as some persons supposed I intended to do) the 'Fourth Party' would not support the motion by rising in their places.

You will, I am sure, understand that any steps taken with the apparent purpose of marking out a separate party within the general body of the Conservatives must be prejudicial to the interests of the whole, and I therefore call your

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attention to the matter in the hope of preventing similar embarrassments in the future.

I remain

Yours very faithfully,

STAFFORD H. NORTHCOTE.

Lord Randolph Churchill to Sir Stafford Northcote.

2 Connaught Place, W.

Dear Sir Stafford Northcote, — In reply to your letter I have to remark that members who sit below the gangway have always acted in the House of Commons with a very considerable degree of independence of the recognised and constituted chiefs of either party, nor can I (who owe nothing to anyone and depend on nobody) in any way or at any time depart from that well-established and highly respectable tradition.

I am not aware of any *communiqué* on the matter about which you write and I must decline to be responsible for the gossip of the Lobby which may find its way into the daily or weekly Press. I would suggest, however, that 'similar embarrassments' would be avoided for the future, if the small party of Conservatives who sit below the gangway were to be occasionally informed beforehand of your intentions on any particular matter. They consider that they have, during the whole of this Parliament, worked harder in the House of Commons than any other members of the party, and they know that a very considerable body of public opinion in the country approves entirely of the course of action which they have adopted. There would be less danger of 'marking out a separate party within the general body of the Conservatives,' if you would use your influence with some of your late colleagues so as to induce them to abstain from holding my friends and myself up to ridicule and dislike by their speeches in the country, or covertly by inspiring that portion of the daily Press which is notoriously under the influence of the Front Opposition Bench to attack and denounce us, whose only fault is that

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at all times and by all means we have never ceased from attacking, denouncing, and embarrassing the present Government. I spoke on this point to Mr. Rowland Winn very freely at the end of the autumn session, and I regret to find that my so doing seems rather to have increased than modified the mischief.

I have the honour to remain
Yours very faithfully,
RANDOLPH S. CHURCHILL.

Sir Stafford Northcote to Lord Randolph Churchill.

Private. 30 St. James's Place, S.W.: March 10, 1883.

Dear Lord Randolph, — I am very sensible of the zeal and ability which you and your immediate friends show in your Parliamentary work. But to turn your work to the best account you really ought to consider the first principles of party action, and, unless you mean absolutely to dissever yourselves from the main body, you ought to act heartily with it except upon occasions when you feel yourselves bound to differ from it; and when those occasions arise, you ought frankly but amicably to tell the leaders what your difficulties and your intentions are. You may be well assured that I am only too glad to confer with all members of the party on these terms, and with yourself as frankly as with anyone. What I must object to is the apparent maintenance of a distinct organisation within the party. It produces infinite soreness and difficulty.

I remain
Faithfully yours,
STAFFORD H. NORTHCOTE.

Lord Randolph Churchill to Sir Stafford Northcote.

2 Connaught Place, W.: March 11.

Dear Sir Stafford Northcote, — I beg to acknowledge the receipt of your letter. I do not see my way to complete acquiescence in the views which you have been kind enough to express to me. Since I have been in Parliament I have

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always acted on my own account, and I shall continue to do so, for I have not found the results of such a line of action at all unsatisfactory. It is not in the power of any Conservative, however hostile towards me he may feel, to throw the slightest doubt upon the orthodoxy of my political views, and with respect to what may conduce to the ultimate benefit of the Tory party I conceive that the widest latitude of opinion at the present moment is not only allowable but, indeed, imperative.

You have not thought it necessary to allude to the remarks I made in reply to your first letter concerning the censure, the intrigue, the dislike, open or imperfectly concealed, of several of those who appear to be deeply in your confidence, and who may possibly be comprised amongst those whom you designate as 'leaders.' These are matters on which I am perfectly informed and equally unconcerned, but at the same time their existence rather weakens the effect of the second letter which I have received from you. The parties I allude to have a past to get rid of; I have not; and the numerous letters which I have for some time received, and which I continue to receive, from all parts of the country, and from all sorts of individuals and bodies, enable me to be confident that my political actions and views are not so entirely personal as you would seem to imagine.

In conclusion, I would observe that I did not commence this correspondence, but that, as you have done me the honour to communicate to me your opinions on my attitude in Parliament, I am under the impression that it would not be respectful to you if I were not to avail myself of this opportunity to place clearly before you what that attitude will continue to be. It will be the same in the future as it has been in the past; and as I have no particular personal object to gain, and therefore nothing to lose, I can await the result with very considerable equanimity.

I have the honour to remain

Yours very faithfully,

RANDOLPH S. CHURCHILL.

This correspondence heralded a state of war. The Tory leaders affected to regard Lord Randolph Churchill as a contumacious fellow who represented no one but himself, and pushed inordinate pretension with boundless impudence. They continued wilfully blind to the ever-growing movement in his favour of popular opinion among their own party all over the country. Lord Randolph, on his part, was not slow or reluctant to assert his power. In December 1882 he had been visited by a deputation of the principal Conservatives of Manchester, inviting him to be their candidate for the then undivided representation of that great city. He complained openly to the deputation of the feeble conduct of the Opposition, and these serious gentlemen did not hesitate to greet with unmistakable approbation censures which he passed upon their own leaders. 1883 Æt. 34

'I see no good object,' he said, 'to be gained by concealing my opinion that the constitutional function of an Opposition is to oppose and not support the Government, and that this function has during the three sessions of this Parliament been either systematically neglected or defectively carried out. More than once since the present Government came into office legitimate opportunities have arisen for conflict, which ought to have resulted in the overthrow of the Ministry or in great damage thereto; and those opportunities have been allowed to pass by unavailed of. I would venture to lay down with confidence the principle that the healthy vitality of a party is not to be estimated by great

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speeches in the country, but only by its action in Parliament; and if its action in Parliament is observed to fall considerably below the level of its great speeches in the country, depend upon it there is something or other not altogether satisfactory in its constitution.'

A more decisive declaration was soon to be required. The statue of Lord Beaconsfield was now finished, and April 19, as the anniversary of his death, had been fixed for its unveiling. Towards the end of March the programme of the ceremony was made public and it was found that the principal part of unveiling the statue and pronouncing the eulogy had been assumed by Sir Stafford Northcote, while to Lord Salisbury was relegated the very secondary function of proposing a vote of thanks to Sir Stafford for his speech. The general, if tacit, acquiescence of the Conservative party in these dispositions could only mean that Sir Stafford Northcote was their recognised and adopted leader and would be the head of any Conservative Government which might come into being. Lord Randolph Churchill was so persuaded of the futility of such an arrangement that he determined at any risk to make a protest, which should at least prevent its unanimous acceptance. On March 29 a letter, which was assigned especial prominence and attracted much attention, appeared in the *Times*, from 'A Tory,' complaining that Sir Stafford Northcote was to unveil the statue and denouncing his selection as the triumph of a 'faction' over the more numerous

adherents of Lord Salisbury. Two days later (April 2) Lord Randolph struck his blow. 1883 Æt. 34

He had prepared his statement with deliberation and he showed it privately to several intimate friends. All, with the single exception of Mr. Chenery, the Editor of the *Times*, who had a journalist's eye for 'copy,' disapproved of its terms and tone. Some urged him not to publish it. One such appeal lies before me as I write. 'Let me beseech you to stop your letter. I may be presumptuous; I may be importunate; but I am sincere — so listen to me. Your letter is a libel on your own party; it lacks finish; it will offend the *whole* party; it will offend the public. You impute as an offence the attention paid to tradesmanlike counsellors. What will the tradesmen think of you? They will be challenged to reject you, inasmuch as you despise them. . . . You are now a power in the party; you have pressed heavily on the leaders; you do so to-day, and may continue to do so if you will husband your resources. They don't like it. If they can blow you out of the way they will, and your letter gives them the chance they have been waiting for. . . . You are attacking them at the wrong moment. Your victim has been ill, sent off to recruit his strength, is back again at his post supported by good wishes and receiving sympathy from all. Are you wanting in generosity? No. *I* say, "No"; but will the public, will your enemies say "No"? . . . Such a letter could only be justified by its success. It will be a failure. Your best friends will be unable

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to prove you right; and when once the tyrant-throne you have raised for yourself, and by yourself, begins to lose the support of the outside public, your enemies within the party will hurry to overwhelm you in its ruins.'

The letter was published forthwith. 'The position of the Conservative party,' wrote Lord Randolph,[1] 'is hopeful and critical. Everything depends upon the Liberals keeping their leader, and upon the Conservatives finding one. An Opposition never wants a policy; but an Opposition, if it is to become a strong Government, must have a leader. The country, though it may be disposed to dispense with Mr. Gladstone and his colleagues, is not likely to exchange them for an arrangement which would practically place the Premiership in commission. The Conservative party must decide at once upon a name. This is more important with the modern electorate than a cry; but at the present moment, when the battle may be joined any day, we have fixed upon neither.'

Yet the Conservative party had an ample choice. 'Lord Salisbury, Lord Cairns, and Sir Stafford Northcote all possess great and peculiar qualifications. If the electors are in a negative frame of mind they may accept Sir Stafford Northcote; if they are in a cautious frame of mind they may shelter themselves under Lord Cairns; if they are in an English frame of mind they will rally round Lord Salisbury.' He proceeded to review the conduct of the Opposition during the last three sessions. 'Such

[1] Abridged.

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a series of neglected opportunities, pusillanimity, combativeness at wrong moments, vacillation, dread of responsibility, repression and discouragement of hard-working followers, collusions with the Government, hankerings after coalitions, jealousies, commonplaces, want of perception on the part of the former lieutenants of Lord Beaconsfield, no one but he who has watched carefully and intelligently the course of affairs in Parliament, can adequately realise or sufficiently express; and if it be the case that Ministers have lost ground in the country, they have only themselves to blame, nor have they the slightest right to cherish feelings of resentment against the regular and responsible Opposition in the House of Commons.

'There are many, I know well, among the Conservative party out of the House of Commons who are convinced that if the present opportunities for success are neglected or inadequately turned to account, the days of the Tory party, as we know it, are in all probability numbered; who are convinced, further, that if these opportunities are handled by third-rate statesmen, such as were just good enough to fill subordinate offices while Lord Beaconsfield was alive, they will be neglected or inadequately turned to account. Many of the party in the country are determined that their efforts and their industry shall not result merely in the short-lived triumph and speedy disgrace of *bourgeois* placemen, "honourable" Tadpoles, hungry Tapers, Irish lawyers. The Conservative party was formed for better ends than these. . . .

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'. . . Lord Salisbury alone among those who have endeavoured to guide the action of the Conservative party, has agitated Scotland and arrested the attention of the Midlands. His name and influence in Lancashire are more than sufficient to counterbalance any advantages which may have accrued to the Liberal party from the adhesion of Lord Derby. Even his opponents admit that he has projected a policy rightly conceiving and eloquently expressing the true principles of popular Toryism. Against him are directed all the malignant efforts of envious mediocrity, and it is essential to the future well-being of the Tory party that these machinations should no longer be permitted to obscure the paramount claims of the one man who is capable, not only of overturning, but also of replacing Mr. Gladstone, and who — partly from a magnanimous trust in the good faith of others, partly from a very high, perhaps an exaggerated, idea of political loyalty — is in danger of being sacrificed to the internecine jealousies of some of the most useless of his former colleagues.'

The publication of this letter excited, as his friends had foreseen, an outburst of indignation against Lord Randolph Churchill. All sections of the Conservative party — including many members who were thoroughly dissatisfied with the conduct of their leaders — united in disowning him and his opinions. When he went down to the House on the morrow of his letter scarcely a member would speak to him, and he sat, alone and abandoned, hunched up in his corner seat. When Sir Stafford Northcote rose to

address some questions to Ministers he received a tremendous ovation. Even Mr. Gorst publicly signified his allegiance to him on April 4. On the same day Mr. W. H. Smith denounced Lord Randolph's letter as an attempt to sow discord in the Conservative ranks and as a foul wrong to both Lord Salisbury and Sir Stafford Northcote. Mr. Chaplin, Mr. Northcote (speaking with the authority of his father), and Mr. Lowther meted out their heavy and righteous censures. Tory and Liberal newspapers vied with each other in wrathful or derisive comment. Two hundred members of the Conservative party attached their names to a memorial expressing their trust and confidence in Sir Stafford, which memorial was duly presented to him by one of their most valued representatives, Sir John Mowbray. Lord Salisbury preserved a golden silence. Never was politician so utterly isolated, so totally repudiated, so signally rebuked, by all of those persons of influence and position upon whose support he must depend. 1883 ÆT. 33

But the results were curiously barren. The intense irritation at Westminster and in the Carlton found no encouragement in the constituencies. The vehement attacks to which Lord Randolph was subjected aroused no echo in the great provincial centres. Country newspapers were restrained in their criticism. The *Times* gave him a cautious, left-handed, but effective support. Manchester showed no wish to withdraw its invitation. The working-class electors declined to have their indignation manufactured from the London clubs and offices; and the conviction

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steadily gained acceptance and assertion that, whatever might be thought of his methods, on the merits of the case 'Randy was right.' So, indeed, he was. In rough but perfectly unmistakable language he had proclaimed a vital truth. He had declared that which most men knew in their hearts, even though they would not or dared not admit it. No amount of memorials or party demonstrations, no loud disclaimers, could prevail against facts which were every day becoming more flagrant.

For a week Lord Randolph remained silent and solitary in his corner seat. Then, just as the storm showed signs of abating, just when the worthies were asking themselves whether, after all, they had not been too hard on a young man who could be, if he only chose, a powerful ally, he published his second letter in the *Times*. In this he described the utter breakdown of 'the dual control' by which the Conservative party was afflicted, how Lord Salisbury had been deserted on the Arrears Bill and how Sir Henry Wolff had been actually impeded in his original opposition to Mr. Bradlaugh by Sir Stafford Northcote. 'The differences of principle which sever the Conservatives from the Radicals are even greater and more vital to the future of the nation than those which agitated the times of Pitt and Fox, or the more recent days of the Duke of Wellington and Lord Grey. The questions of the continuation of the monarchy, the existence of an hereditary legislature, the preservation of a central government for the three kingdoms, the connection

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between Church and State, are all more or less rapidly coming within the range of practical politics. . . . On all these and such like questions the Conservative party hold strong opinions, and if these opinions are to prevail it is essential that they should be represented by, and identified with, a statesman who fears not to meet and who knows how to sway immense masses of the working classes and who either by his genius or his eloquence, or by all the varied influences of an ancient name, can "move the hearts of households." Without such a leader the Conservative party is beaten even before the battle is begun. . . .

'. . . I am not in the least alarmed,' the writer concluded, 'by the violence of the replies to the letter which you were good enough to insert a week ago. I know well that many of those who are expressing with so much heat and indignation their disagreement with my views have themselves on many occasions during the present Parliament been loud in their condemnation of the apathy and irresolution of the Opposition and of the fatal influence exercised by one or two of those who surround the leader. It is because of my belief that the maintenance of the Constitution and the existence of a strong, resolute, intelligent and active Tory party are inseparably connected with each other that I have referred to the incidents of the past with the object of averting grave disaster in the future. If that object is even approached by my letters to you, I am only too happy to bear the brunt of a little

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temporary effervescence and to be the scapegoat on which doomed mediocrities may lay the burden of their exposed incapacity. . . .'

Mr. Chenery was very doubtful about this letter and urged Lord Randolph not to publish it. 'You have produced,' he wrote, 'a great effect by the first letter, which this, in my opinion, would only undo.' But Lord Randolph persisted and the letter was printed. On April 19 Sir Stafford Northcote unveiled the Beaconsfield statue. Lord Randolph wrote for the *Fortnightly Review* of May a reflective description of this event. He called the article, from which various quotations have already been made, 'Elijah's Mantle.' He cannot claim in any special degree the gift of letters. In private he wrote exactly as he would have spoken to his friends. His public writings were for the most part speeches set forth on paper. But 'Elijah's Mantle' shows a higher degree of literary excellence than any other record he has left behind him. In its picturesque presentment, in its well-chosen words, in the lucidity and force of the argument, it proved not unworthy of the almost universal attention which the personality of the writer drew upon it from the political world.

Lord Randolph described the unveiling of the statue 'under a murky sky and amidst splashing rain'; the melancholy change which a few years had effected in the position and prospects of the once mighty party Lord Beaconsfield had led; the imposing majority of 1874, now transferred bodily to the Liberal side; and the sudden and stunning nature of the

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catastrophe of 1880. What a surprise it was to the placemen, the rank and file and 'the old men who crooned over the fires at the Carlton'! 'That some malign and venomous genius must suddenly have possessed the mind of the people' was their only explanation. And on all this Lord Beaconsfield's death — 'the crowning blow sent by a mischievous and evil-minded fortune.' While 'the Chief' lived, hope had lived too. But from the hour of his death every Tory, in and out of Parliament, high or low, rich or poor, had exclaimed, muttered or thought: 'Oh, if Lord Beaconsfield were alive!' That was a monument to the departed leader more enduring than the bronze on the Abbey Green. Was it not also a criticism, pointed and unanswerable, upon the conduct of affairs since his death, which 'no amount of memorials of confidence, no number of dinners in Pall Mall, no repetitions, however frequent, of gushing embraces between the Lord and the Commoner,' could gainsay?

Lord Randolph thought that Lord Beaconsfield's career could be painted in a single sentence: 'Failure, failure, failure, partial success, renewed failure, ultimate and complete triumph.' The victory of 1874 had given a golden opportunity to the Tories; but owing to the natural decay of Lord Beaconsfield's physical vigour, that opportunity had been wasted. Would it return? 'The Liberals can afford better to sustain great disasters than the Conservatives, for there is a recuperative power innate in Liberal principles — the result of the

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longing of the human mind for progress and for adventure — which enables them to recover rapidly and unexpectedly from misfortunes which would seem to be fatal. The Tories, though possessing many other advantages, fail in this respect. As time goes on, their successes will be fewer and separated from each other by intervals of growing length; unless, indeed, the policy and the principles of the Tory party should undergo a surprising development; unless the secret of Lord Beaconsfield's theory of government is appropriated, understood, believed in, sown broadcast amongst the people; unless the mantle of Elijah should fall upon some one who is capable enough and fortunate enough, carrying with him a united party, to bring to perfection those schemes of Imperial rule and of social reform which Lord Beaconsfield had only time to dream of, to hint at, and to sketch.'

Lord Randolph then proceeded to outline for the first time the conception of Tory Democracy which had now possessed his mind.

'Some of Lord Beaconsfield's phrases will bear any amount of microscopic examination. Speaking at Manchester in 1871, by the alteration of a letter in a quotation from the Vulgate he revealed the policy which ought to guide Tory leaders at the present time: "Sanitas sanitatum, omnia sanitas." Such was the quotation, in which a careful mind will discover a scheme of social progress and reform of dimensions so large and wide-spreading that many volumes would not suffice to explain its details. By

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it is shadowed forth, and in it is embraced, a social revolution which, passing by and diverting attention from wild longings for organic change, commences with the little, peddling Boards of Health which occupy and delight the Local Government Department, comprises Lord Salisbury's plans for the amelioration of the dwellings of the poor, carries with it Lord Carnarvon's ideal of compulsory national insurance, includes Sir Wilfrid Lawson's temperance propaganda, preserves and reclaims commons and open spaces — favoured by Mr. Bryce — constructs people's parks, collects and opens to the masses museums, libraries, art-galleries, does not disdain the public washhouses of Mr. Jesse Collings. Public and private thrift must animate the whole, for it is from public thrift that the funds for these largesses can be drawn and it is by private thrift alone that their results can be utilised and appreciated. The expression "Tory Democracy" has excited the wonder of some, the alarm of others, and great and bitter ridicule from the Radical party. But the "Tory Democracy" may yet exist; the elements for its composition only require to be collected and the labour may some day possibly be effected by the man, whoever he may be, upon whom the mantle of Elijah has descended.'

Lord Randolph's letters had aimed at establishing the leadership of Lord Salisbury and had constituted an appeal to him to come forward and head the 'New Tories.' They also intimated with tolerable plainness that if Lord Salisbury were unable or unwilling to

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don the mantle, there was another who would not hesitate to assume it. References to 'a statesman who fears not to meet, and who knows how to sway, immense masses of the working classes,' and who 'by all the varied influences of an ancient name can move "the hearts of households,"' although directly applied to Lord Salisbury, were obviously capable of an alternative interpretation. The suggestion was perfectly understood by all and in political circles a hearty, concerted, but deplorably unsuccessful attempt was made to laugh it out of existence.

By the end of April it was evident that the outburst against Lord Randolph Churchill had in no wise injured his position in the country. In order to meet the difficulties of the Bradlaugh case and the repeated explosions of passion to which it gave rise, the Prime Minister had introduced the Affirmation Bill, which would enable persons of no religious belief to affirm, like Quakers, instead of taking the ordinary oath. On this Mr. Gladstone delivered one of his most magnificent orations. When Lord Randolph replied (April 30) he was heard with severe and respectful attention in all parts of the House. He spoke long and thoughtfully, and, although no one could maintain the elevation to which Mr. Gladstone had raised the debate, it was felt that the Minister's arguments had been not inadequately met.

'The present Bill,' he said, 'is not for the benefit of the whole nation; it is for the benefit of one man, and it is brought in in deference to clamour and violence.

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A DREAM OF THE FUTURE.

Little Lord R.: 'Ah! they'll have to give *me* a statue—some day!!'

Punch April 28, 1883.

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Let us consider for a moment who are the classes outside which are opposed to the representative of atheism. They are the religious, the moral, the law-abiding, and the industrious. Who are the personal supporters of atheism outside this House? For the most part they are the residuum, the rabble, and the scum of the population; the bulk of them are persons to whom all restraint — religious, moral, or legal — is odious and intolerable. Why are we so anxious to give these latter a victory and a triumph over the former?

'I take this Bill of the Government and I strip it of all those flimsy disguises with which the Prime Minister so ingeniously but so uselessly clothed it and I place it naked before the Parliament and before the country — a Bill for the admission of avowed atheists into the House of Commons — and I say that this is a fundamental change in the Constitution of such vital and momentous importance that the people of this country will not hastily ratify it and that the opinion of the country must be ascertained before the Parliament can assent to it.

'We must not only think of the relief of Mr. Bradlaugh, or of the relief of this House from a slight difficulty; we must think what would be the effect on the people of this State of a recognition of unlawful doctrines, and of giving place in the immediate governing body to a man who professes and who preaches that the Christian religion, on which our law has been founded, is false, its morality defective, and its promises illusory. Shall we not be

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giving to those doctrines a tremendous impetus by altering the Constitution of this country, in order that they may be officially represented in our Councils and may influence our decisions? Can we contemplate without alarm the revulsion that such an act might occasion among those masses of the people who, with some hope of a happier state hereafter, are toiling their weary way through the world, content to tolerate for a time their less fortunate lot — the revulsion that would occur if they inferred from the action of the Legislature that it was even possible for their faith to be false? Surely the horrors of the French Revolution should give some idea of the effect on the masses of the State recognition of atheism! It is from disasters such as those that we have been very probably preserved by the Christian characteristics of the community. Let me quote the words of Lord Erskine: "The religious and moral sense of the people of Great Britain is the sheet-anchor which alone can hold the vessel of State amidst the storms that agitate the world."

'The peculiarity of the English Constitution is that it is founded upon and incorporated with the Christian morality. It is a characteristic which is possessed by no other nation, however free or however great; and does it not occur to you that the extraordinary prosperity and duration and apparent future of our Empire is not, perhaps, unconnected with this famous characteristic?

'You,' he concluded, pointing to the Liberal party, 'proudly claim the task of carrying the cause

of religious liberty to its furthest imaginable limits; be it ours, I reply, nor is it less noble, to endeavour to restrain your aspirations within the bounds of reason and of policy.' 1883 Æt. 34

The division produced a great excitement. When the numbers were declared it was found that the Affirmation Bill had upon its second reading been cast out by a majority of three (292—289).

The satisfaction of the Tory party and of some of the best and worthiest people in it at this result was enormous. In the House of Commons very largely, and outside in the Press and among the electors almost entirely, the credit of the victory was assigned to Lord Randolph. 'The best speech he has ever made' was Sir Henry James's comment. The *Punch* cartoon of the week represented him as Ariel urging his hounds to the pursuit and expulsion of Caliban. Once again he was the hero of the hour. One among many letters of approval and congratulation must have given him especial pleasure, and may be quoted here. 'Though it is years since we met,' wrote Dr. Creighton (May 1, 1883), 'and though I only live as a vague memory in your mind, I cannot help writing you a few lines to say how much I admired your speech last night. As an observer of the course of politics who tries to give them an historical value, I watch your career with growing interest. It seems to me that you combine in a remarkable degree the real principles of statesmanship with an attention to the conditions under which our political life has to be carried on. It is easy to

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be a doctrinaire; it is easy to be a purely party politician; it is not easy to combine the two into a distinct line of policy. I recognise with admiration your increasing success in this direction and your genuine devotion to the serious pursuit of politics.'

'It is indeed a pleasure to me,' wrote Lord Randolph in reply, 'to know that you have not forgotten your former rather unsatisfactory pupil and that you follow, not without interest and perhaps with some hope, a course of which Fate has not yet determined the form or the end.'

The ceremony of April 19, 1883, was the origin of a new idea destined to spread and flourish over an ever-widening area during all the years that have followed. The Fourth Party had grown spontaneously out of the Bradlaugh controversy. The Primrose League sprang from the unveiling of Lord Beaconsfield's statue. Sir Henry Wolff did not attend in his place to hear Sir Stafford Northcote's speech and Lord Salisbury's vote of thanks, and he arrived at the House of Commons late in the afternoon. The well-known superintendent of the members' cloak-room, Mr. Cove, said to him, 'You must have a primrose,' and gave him one. Thus adorned, Sir Henry entered the Chamber and found the whole Conservative party similarly decorated with Lord Beaconsfield's favourite flower. The fact impressed him vividly and he said to Lord Randolph Churchill as they walked home together, 'What a show of Primroses! This should be turned to account. Why not start a "Primrose League"?'

Lord Randolph was instantly interested. 'Draw up a plan,' he said, 'to carry out your idea and we will see what can be done.' 1883 Æt. 34

Sir Henry Wolff set to work at once. He looked for his models to the Orange Society which was influential in his constituency of Portsmouth, and to the numerous benefit societies — Foresters, Oddfellows, Good Templars, and the like — with which he was acquainted. He saw how popular the badges, grades, and honorary distinctions of these bodies were with the working classes who supported them. He resolved that the Primrose League should be inferior to none of these in the variety of its regalia or the magniloquence of its titles. He discussed all this at length with Lord Randolph Churchill from day to day; but it was not until the autumn that anyone else was admitted to their councils. During October and November the first practical steps were taken. Lord Randolph Churchill, Sir John Gorst, Sir Henry Wolff, and Sir Alfred Slade met together to form 'a new political society which should embrace all classes and all creeds except atheists and enemies of the British nation.' All four were members of the Council of the National Union. They had exceptional knowledge of the state of Conservative organisations. They saw quite clearly the failure of the existing Conservative and Constitutional Associations to suit the popular taste or to succeed in joining all classes together in defence of the essential doctrines of Toryism. The constitution of the League, its objects and its machinery were settled

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even in detail at meetings held during these two months. Specimen badges were made. The declaration to be signed by every member of the League was drawn up by Sir John Gorst in the following terms: 'I declare, on my honour and faith, that I will devote my best ability to the *Maintenance of Religion*, of the *Estates of the Realm* and of the *Imperial Ascendency of the British Empire*, and that, consistently with my allegiance to the Sovereign of these Realms, I will promote with discretion and fidelity the above objects, being those of the Primrose League.' Finally on November 17, in the card-room of the Carlton Club, these four gentlemen resolved themselves into the Ruling Council of the League with power to add to their number.

The circle was then gradually increased by the addition of Lord Randolph's closest political allies. Colonel Burnaby, Mr. Percy Mitford, Mr. Dixon Hartland and Sir Algernon Borthwick attended the next few meetings. Great efforts were being made by the leaders of the Conservative party in Birmingham to induce Lord Randolph to stand for that city. Mr. Joseph Rowlands and other prominent Birmingham men were frequently in London on that errand; all were pressed into the League. Lord Randolph Churchill's numerous relations were enlisted. A Ladies' Grand Council was formed, of which Lady Randolph and Lady Borthwick were members and the Duchess of Marlborough the President. A humble office was taken on a second floor in Essex Street, Strand, and the first public announcement

was made December 18, 1883, in the advertisement columns of the *Times* and the *Morning Post*, as follows: — 1883 Æt. 34

> THE PRIMROSE TORY LEAGUE. — Gentlemen wishing to be enrolled in the Primrose Tory League must apply in writing to the Registrar, Primrose League, care of Messrs. Lacy, Hartland & Co., Bankers, London, E.C., or Messrs. Hopkinson & Sons, Bankers, 3 Regent Street, London, by whom all information will be supplied.

The new political society was in its beginnings viewed with sour distrust by all Conservatives who were officially orthodox, virtuous and loyal. It was regarded as a dodge of the Fourth Party and a new weapon of schism. The struggle on the council of the National Union during the year 1884, which must soon be described, intensified these feelings. The early Primrose knights and dames wore their badges everywhere in public and faced in consequence the keenest ridicule. The *Morning Post* was their only substantial ally. The statutes and ordinances of the League excited the derision of almost all of those who, a few years later, were proud to subscribe to them. The idea in itself was vital; but only the personality of Lord Randolph Churchill and the hopes and enthusiasms which he excited, prevented it from being smothered during its first few months of existence. As it was, only 957 members — including, however, many persons of influence — had enrolled themselves by the end of 1884, and 11,366 by the end of 1885. The Home Rule struggle raised these numbers to 237,283 in 1886

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and 565,861 in 1887. A million members was reached in 1891 and the League claims at the present time, twenty-one years after its foundation, to have 1,703,708 knights, dames, and associates upon its rolls; and although its merits as a national institution must necessarily be variously appraised, its power and utility as a political engine have never been questioned.

As the session drew on, the warfare in the House of Commons became fiercer. Day after day Lord Randolph and his friends assailed the Government with amazing variety and increasing violence. The Prime Minister was repeatedly forced to defend himself and his colleagues from reproach and his encounters with Lord Randolph Churchill were of almost nightly occurrence. 'You will kill Mr. Gladstone one of these days,' said some one to Lord Randolph. 'Oh, no!' he rejoined, 'he will long survive me. I often tell my wife what a beautiful letter he will write her, proposing my burial in Westminster Abbey.'

In all this fighting the hostility of the Front Opposition Bench to the Fourth Party was very plainly marked. Sir Stafford Northcote repeatedly dissociated himself from Lord Randolph, repudiated him, rebuked him, and even supported the Government against him. A Treasury minute had been issued forbidding Civil Servants to petition the Government through members of Parliament. Forthwith Lord Randolph announced that on a named day he would present 250 petitions signed by over

Primrose League.

No. 1

Diploma of Knighthood.

These lines testify that The Lord Randolph Spencer Churchill, M.P.

Was enrolled a Knight Harbinger of the Primrose League on the recommendation of the Ruling Council on the 17th November 1883 having complied With the Statutes and Ordinances thereof.

His League number is 1

Testified by the Registrar

Frank D. Thomas

Registrar.

Dated Nov. 17th 1883

Mark of the Grand Councillor, P

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2,000 Civil Servants. Although Ministers took no action against the signatories, Lord Randolph raised the whole matter in the House as a question of privilege. In his speech he attacked extravagantly Mr. Algernon West, who, as Chairman of the Board of Inland Revenue, had signed the offending circular. He condemned the practice of Cabinet Ministers — Sir Stafford Northcote as well as Mr. Gladstone — of appointing their former private secretaries to important posts in the Civil Service. The training of a private secretary — 'among the backstairs intrigues and dirty work of office' — was no fit preparation for departmental employment. An attack on a public servant 'who cannot defend himself' is always resented by the supporters of a Government. On this occasion Mr. Gladstone and Sir Stafford Northcote vied with each other in terms of reprobation. Sir Stafford said he had never heard so many misstatements in a single speech. Mr. Gladstone regretted that Lord Randolph should degrade his Parliamentary position by such conduct. The House indulged itself in that pleasant warmth which comes from righteous indignation.

Lord Randolph had persuaded himself, upon a mass of evidence collected for him by Mr. Wilfrid Blunt and others in Egypt, that the Khedive Tewfik was indirectly responsible for the massacre of June 11, 1882, which he believed had been instigated from the palace in order to compass the ruin of Arabi and the national movement, and provoke decisively the intervention of the European Powers. Having

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adopted this opinion, he held tenaciously to it, and thrust it upon Parliament with earnestness and even with passion. Although in the first instance he had supported the pension to Lord Alcester for his services in bombarding Alexandria, on the ground that it was a reward to the naval profession as a whole, he availed himself of the passage of the necessary Bill (June 8) to bring forward his charges against the Khedive. The House was astonished at his vehemence. The Prime Minister's reply was, however, curiously guarded. He did not absolutely deny the charge. All he said was that the information in the possession of the Government afforded not the least confirmation of it. It was a 'tremendous charge,' and the Government would be glad to examine the evidence on which it was based. Indeed, it was Sir Stafford Northcote who used the hardest language. While admitting that he considered the warlike intervention in Egypt wrong and unjustifiable, he expressed 'extreme regret' at Lord Randolph's attempt to raise such an issue on the vote for a naval reward to a distinguished officer. 'I decline,' he said, 'to be led by the noble lord, and I trust the House will decline to be induced by the noble lord to accept a position which I consider would be degrading to its honour.' This, as Mr. Gorst said later in the debate, was a statement which would have been better made by the Prime Minister than by the leader of the Opposition, who, however he might view the opinions of Lord Randolph Churchill, should leave it to opponents to attack him.

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The affair proceeded further. One of Arabi's officers, Suleiman Sami, was brought before a court-martial on the charge of burning Alexandria. The witnesses demanded by the defence were not allowed to appear; the trial was unexpectedly curtailed; and the prisoner was sentenced to death. Lord Randolph exerted himself to procure at least delay before the sentence was executed, in order that the irregularities at the trial might be exposed. He declared that Suleiman Sami was himself a witness whose death would be 'a god-send to the Egyptian Government.' Plied with questions and appeals, the Government undertook to make inquiries; but before any satisfactory information was obtained and while the House was still under the impression that the matter was in suspense, Suleiman Sami was hanged. On this being known the feeling in the Conservative party was so strong that Sir Stafford himself moved the adjournment of the House to discuss the conduct of Ministers in regard to the execution, which Lord Randolph furiously described as 'the grossest and vilest judicial murder that ever stained the annals of Oriental justice.' In this attack the Fourth Party were supported by the great mass of Conservative members.

At Mr. Gladstone's invitation, Lord Randolph laid before him a quantity of evidence which he had obtained in support of his assertions. This evidence was examined by Ministers and officially rejected; but it is remarkable that the Government took no steps, by rebutting it in detail, to discredit their

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pertinacious assailant. They could not tell how far a fearless and impartial inquiry into the labyrinth of sanguinary intrigue which had cumbered the field of Egyptian politics before the British intervention might carry them. They wrapped themselves in a silence of prudence or disdain, and Lord Randolph continued to repeat his statements with undiminished assurance. He forwarded formally to Sir Stafford Northcote, among others, a copy of the evidence he had sent to the Prime Minister. The style and superscription of the acknowledging letter afford a key to their relations at this period: —

30 St. James's Place: July 1, 1883.

Dear Lord R. Churchill, — I am much obliged to you for sending me a copy of the papers you have submitted to Mr. Gladstone. — I remain faithfully yours,

Stafford H. Northcote.

The Bill for the Suppression of Corrupt and Illegal Practices at Parliamentary Elections brought the Fourth Party together almost for the last time. As it passed through the Committee stage in the beginning of July, all the four friends spoke frequently upon it and supported each other. One night, July 3, having dined together at Lord Randolph's house, they descended upon the House of Commons rather late and, not having heard the early part of the discussion, demanded with perverse audacity that the Chairman should read the clause, as it stood amended, from the Chair. Sir Henry Wolff was the first to make the request and he threatened to move to report progress unless it was granted. Mr. Gladstone — always in

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attendance on the House — did not deny the right of members to make such a demand; but hoped that an evil precedent would not be established. Lord Randolph appealed to the Chair. The Chairman intimated that, having read the clause twice, he would read it no more. Mr. Balfour then made a conciliatory speech, proposing that as a compromise the Attorney-General, Sir Henry James, should read the clause. Sir Henry James refused. Sir Henry Wolff thereupon moved to report progress. By this time the House was very full. Sir Stafford Northcote supported the Government and urged Sir Henry not to persist. Lord Randolph then, under repeated interruptions from Ministerialists, amid growing excitement, attacked the Government and Mr. Gladstone and Mr. Herbert Gladstone 'brought in to cheer the Prime Minister' and all their works; but to Sir Stafford he was very polite and deferential and he expressed in modest language the hope that the leader of the Opposition would, after all, support them in their protest. The appeal was, however, fruitless.

On one occasion about this time Lord Salisbury himself seems to have expostulated with Sir Henry Wolff. But the member for Portsmouth had his own methods of defence. 'I do not understand,' said Lord Salisbury as they walked together one day, 'what your real political position is.' 'Oh, I am a "Smithite," Lord Salisbury,' replied Sir Henry reverentially, — 'a convinced "Smithite" in politics.' 'But what is your object?' inquired the Tory leader.

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'To do good,' was the bland response, — 'simply to do good'; and the conversation passed on to other topics.

From these contentions Lord Randolph was suddenly withdrawn by a solemn and unexpected event. On June 28 the Duke of Marlborough persuaded the House of Lords to reject by a narrow majority (145—140) the Deceased Wife's Sister Bill upon its third reading. His speech was perhaps the best he had ever made. It was also his last. On the night of July 4, when he went to bed, he seemed in the best of health and spirits. Early the next morning he was found dead by his servants, struck down by that same swift, unheralded affection of the heart which was a few years later to end the life of his heir. Lord Randolph was profoundly shocked and grieved by his father's death. He passed many hours reading over his father's letters, all carefully preserved from his boyhood days. That strong religious strain in his nature to which reference has already been made, afforded him consolation in this season of trouble and, though always a devout man, he became much more regular in devotional exercises than at any other period of his life. He had in his hands the threads of half a dozen political enterprises, for the success of which his constant presence in the House of Commons was necessary. He cast them all away from him and retired at once to Blenheim. Many appeals were made to him to return to the arena, where his absence was instantly felt and regretted even by those in his own party who were antagonistic to him. But nothing would induce him

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to go near Parliament for the rest of the year. 'You are very kind,' he wrote to Wolff, 'wanting me to come back to the House; but it is quite impossible. I am not up to it physically or mentally, and am longing to get away abroad. . . . It is very melancholy here — sad recollections at every moment. Nothing can be nicer than Blandford to everyone.'

The two brothers were very closely drawn together by their common mourning, and all bitterness faded at once out of the political world. Sir Stafford Northcote wrote, in the gentle courtesy of his nature, a generous and affectionate letter of sympathy and regret and a private correspondence followed between them which stands in pleasant contrast to the general course of their relations and shows that in modern times personal kindness and good feeling lie never very far below the sullen surface of English politics.

Lord Randolph hurried away with his wife and son to Gastein before the month was out and here his spirits gradually regained their usual buoyancy. His brother joined him late in August and they dawdled home together through Switzerland, visiting its beautiful places, climbing the Rigi 'like the meanest and commonest of Tow Rows,' and so back to Blenheim. During the autumn and winter the Duke of Marlborough persuaded Lord Randolph to start again his pack of harriers; and this pursuit — together with the project, about which the new master of Blenheim was keenly excited, of bringing the railway from Oxford to Woodstock — proved so absorbing that politics seem for a time to have been almost abandoned.

CHAPTER VI

TORY DEMOCRACY

'The Tory party in this country is the national party; it is the really democratic party of England. It supports the institutions of the country, because they have been established for the common good, and because they secure the equality of civil rights without which, whatever may be its name, no government can be free, and based upon which principle every government, however it may be styled, is, in fact, a democracy.'

B. DISRAELI: *A Vindication of the English Constitution.*

1882–1885 THE conditions of British politics during the Parliament of 1880, whether in the House of Commons or abroad in the country, were peculiar — perhaps unprecedented. Mr. Gladstone's Administration, outwardly so powerful alike in the capacity of its members and the number and fidelity of its supporters, was divided by zig-zag, oblique, inconsistent yet fundamental dissensions. Nor were these disturbances the temporary or accidental effect of particular men or measures. There were important measures. There were earnest, ambitious men. But something more lay behind the unrest and uncertainties of the day. Not merely the decay of a Government or the natural over-ripeness of a party produced the agitations of 1885 and 1886. It was the end of an epoch. The long dominion of the

middle classes, which had begun in 1832, had come to its close and with it the almost equal reign of Liberalism. The great victories had been won. All sorts of lumbering tyrannies had been toppled over. Authority was everywhere broken. Slaves were free. Conscience was free. Trade was free. But hunger and squalor and cold were also free; and the people demanded something more than liberty. The old watchwords still rang true; but they were not enough. And how to fill the void was the riddle that split the Liberal party. It happened, moreover, that at this very time, already so critical, a Liberal Government had been forced to deal with all kinds of affairs for the efficient conduct of which their formulas furnished no clue. They were compelled to intervene by force of arms in Egypt, to repress popular movements, to banish popular leaders, to hang revolutionaries, to devise ingenious instruments of Coercion, to mutilate Parliamentary procedure and to curtail the freedom of debate. And thus, while half the Cabinet were ransacking the past for weapons of Executive authority, others were groping dimly towards a vague Utopia. 1882–1885

All this confusion was still worse confounded by the imminence of a further extension of the franchise. The 'ten-pounder' and the 'householder' had been stages of growth. The evolution was now to be completed, or practically completed. The government of a world-wide Empire was, for the first time in human experience, to be thrown unreservedly to the millions. And no man could predict the results of that

1882–1885 experiment. There seemed to be no reason to assume that any large body of working-class electors would ever vote Tory. Who could possibly have foreseen that whether from conscious choice between men and parties or from the unsuspected operation of irresistible forces till then latent, the millions would peacefully hand back their powers to political organisations and so to established authority; that enfranchised multitudes would constitute themselves the buttresses of privilege and property; that a free press would by its freedom sap the influence of debate and through its prosperity become the implement of wealth; that members and constituencies would become less independent, not more independent; that Ministers would become more powerful, not less powerful; that the march would be ordered backward along the beaten track, not forward in some new direction; and that after a period of convulsion and flux, twenty years of Tory Government would set in? Who would have listened to such paradox with patience?

The differences of mood and aim which racked the Ministerial party were reflected, only less vividly, in the Tory ranks. A Conservative Opposition smarting under what they regarded as most undeserved defeat and hampered by leaders to whose defects no one could be blind, had been forced constantly to support their antagonists upon the main issues of their policy. They found the Liberal Government engaged in assertions of authority, at home and abroad, with which all their deepest instincts inclined them

to sympathise. The enforcement of the sternest forms of Coercion in Ireland, the suspension and suppression of disorderly members at Westminster, the launching of great warlike enterprises across the sea, were all public objects which upon the highest patriotic grounds commanded Tory assent. Upon the other hand they hated with the fiercest animosity of faction the Ministers who directed these affairs. They knew that a crisis was approaching. They feared — not without reason — the formidable union of Gladstone and democracy. They believed that he was ruining the country and was prepared to dishonour the Empire. Yet they found themselves repeatedly compelled to vote with him; and even when opportunities of legitimate attack were offered, no one of their champions seemed able to strike the blow. 1882–1885

The hesitancy and incompetence which marked the conduct of the Conservative Opposition — although to some extent due to very lofty motives of public duty — filled with exasperation the militant Tories in the country. Members of Parliament, confronted week after week by definite issues on which votes had to be recorded, found themselves drawn inch by inch into supporting whole spheres of Governmental action. Their friends outside took a more general view. They saw what they took to be a succession of feeble surrenders before Mr. Gladstone's prestige. They saw their representatives, bewitched by his authority and eloquence, in the same Lobby with their arch-enemy. They saw the Liberal

1882–1885 Government staggering ponderously forward, in spite of disunion, difficulty, and peril, through a succession of mismanaged warlike undertakings to a series of pernicious domestic reforms. And no man apparently to stand in their path! And then, all of a sudden, a man arose alone, or almost alone, to do battle on their behalf. They watched him struggling day after day against overwhelming odds, overthrown a score of times, deserted and even tripped up by those who should have sustained him; yet always returning with inexhaustible activity to the attack and gaining from month to month substantial and undoubted successes.

The Conservative party outside Parliament had as little real liking for much that Lord Randolph Churchill said about Ireland and Egypt as their leaders and representatives in the House. They could not find any sympathy for the followers of Mr. Parnell. They did not enjoy being told that British troops had been used in Egypt to collect the bondholders' debts, or the description of such thrilling episodes as the bombardment of a city by an ironclad fleet, a cavalry charge by moonlight, or the storming of an entrenched position as 'tawdry military glories.' They could not join whole-heartedly in eulogies of a Pasha whom British justice had condemned to life-long exile, or in attacks upon the morality and humanity of a Khedive whom British bayonets had replaced upon his throne. All this, even while they cheered, seemed to them unpatriotic. But they could not overlook the commotion which Lord Randolph Churchill's denunciations wrought in the Gladstonian ranks, or the

embarrassments in which they involved the Radical supporters of the Ministry. They loved their country much, but they hated Gladstone more; and they consoled themselves with the belief (which did Lord Randolph Churchill less justice than he deserved) that he did not really mean all he said; that it was only his way of beating the Grand Old Man; and that, after all, he was Jingo and True Blue at heart. 1882–1885

During the years which had passed since the new Parliament had met, the working-class supporters of the Conservative party, particularly in the great towns, had come to look with especial favour upon Lord Randolph Churchill. To these were added a considerable defection from those who had hitherto counted themselves Liberals. He touched the imagination of the English people; and he appealed especially to their youth. 'The young men of England,' he exclaimed, 'are joining the Tory party in great numbers. The youth of England is on our side.' He was, indeed, soon forced to defend himself from the assumption 'that any expression of opinion from a person who has no claim to the monumental age of 101, is a breach of decorum, almost an act of indecency, and an indication of incurable vice.' 'Youth,' he said (Edinburgh, December 20, 1883), 'is no doubt a great calamity, and it appears to excite all the worst passions of human nature among those who no longer possess it. But we may, I think, chase away such depressing reflections by remembering that youth is a calamity which grows less bitter and less poignant as the years go

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by, and that by the sheer and simple process of living and survival we must, each in our turn, approach the summit of the wave.'

By the end of 1882 he was already unquestionably the most popular speaker in the Conservative party. In 1884 and 1885 he equalled, if he did not surpass, Mr. Gladstone himself in the interest and enthusiasm which his personality aroused. Wherever he went he was received by tremendous throngs and with extraordinary demonstrations of goodwill. In times when good Conservatives despaired of the fortunes of their party under a democratic franchise and even, making a virtue of necessity, regarded it as almost immoral to court a working-class vote, and when the chiefs of Toryism looked upon the resisting powers of small shop and lodging-house keepers, of suburban villadom, and of the genial and seductive publican as almost the only remaining bulwarks of the Constitution, Lord Randolph Churchill boldly enlisted the British nation in defence of Church and State. At a time when Liberal orators and statesmen, 'careering about the country,' as Lord Randolph described them, 'calling themselves "the people of England,"' were looking forward to an election which should relegate the Conservative party to the limbo of obsolete ideas, they were disconcerted by the spectacle, repeatedly presented, of multitudes of working men hanging upon the words of a young aristocrat; and Radicals, bidding higher and higher to catch the popular fancy, heard with disgust the loudest acclamations of the crowd accorded to Lord Randolph Churchill as he

denounced 'the Moloch of Midlothian'[1] or 'the pinchbeck Robespierre'[2] for war and tyranny beyond the sea, profusion and misgovernment at home. 1882–1885

Abuse was retorted on his head in vain. '"Yahoo Churchill,"' 'Little Randy,' 'Cheeky Randy,' 'the music-hall cad,' 'the Champagne Charley of politics,' were designations which measured at once his popularity and the rising fury of his foes. His fierce moustache and 'note of interrogation' head lent themselves to caricature. He was drawn as a pigmy, a pug dog, a gnat, a wasp, a ribald and vicious monkey, so habitually, that nearly everyone, who had not seen him in the flesh, believed that his physical proportions were far below the common standards of humanity; but the contrast between his reputed stature and the majestic outlines of Mr. Gladstone and Sir William Harcourt only enhanced his fighting qualities in the public eye. 'Give it 'em hot, Randy,' cried the crowds in the streets and at the meetings, till he himself was forced to complain that he was expected to salute his opponents with every species of vituperation. But, to tell the truth, he responded to the public demand with inexhaustible generosity. He spared no one. Neither persons nor principles escaped an all-embracing ridicule. The most venerated leaders of the Liberal party, famous in the great days of its rise, fared no better at his hands than the crudest and most violent of the New Radicals. One by one Mr. Bright, Mr. Gladstone, Lord Hartington,

[1] Mr. Gladstone. [2] Mr. Chamberlain.

1882–1885 Lord Granville, Sir Charles Dilke, Mr. Chamberlain, Mr. Bradlaugh, and Mr. Schnadhorst were summoned before that irreverent tribunal and exhibited to popular censure and derision.

His speeches were effective far beyond the circles of his hearers. As early as the spring of 1881 the *Morning Post* began to report him *verbatim*. Mr. Chenery, always a firm believer in his genius, followed this example almost immediately. Instead of that paragraph of mutilated misrepresentation with which so many eminent Ministers and ex-Ministers have to remain dissatisfied, column after column of the *Times* was filled with the oratory of an unproved stripling of thirty-two. The remonstrances which jealousy suggested did not discourage Mr. Chenery; for, indeed, Lord Randolph's speeches were the best of 'copy.' His wonderful memory enabled him to make the most elaborate preparations. His earlier speeches were almost all written out beforehand and learned by heart. He had the knack of being able to foresee the occasion and he wrote not an essay or an argument, but just the kind of harangue that would fit the mood of his audience. His style was essentially rhetorical, and much more spontaneous than his peculiar methods of preparation would imply. He seems to have written with scarcely a single correction and without hesitation of any kind, as fast as he could set pen to paper. Indeed, I fancy that he wrote his speeches chiefly for an exercise of memory and to fix them clearly in his mind and did not by any means make them up

with a pen in his hand. Once written, they could be repeated almost without notes and quite without alteration. But in this laborious process they gained a logical sequence which, while it did not in the least detract from the delivery, added vastly to their virtues in reproduction. 1882–1885

Above all, they were entirely fresh and original. Wit, abuse, epigrams, imagery, argument — all were 'Randolphian.' No one could guess beforehand what he was going to say nor how he would say it. No one else said the same kind of things, or said them in the same kind of way. He possessed the strange quality, unconsciously exerted and not by any means to be simulated, of compelling attention, and of getting himself talked about. Every word he spoke was studied with interest and apprehension. Each step he took was greeted with a gathering chorus of astonished cries. As Tacitus said of Mucianus: 'Omnium quae dixerat, feceratque, arte quadam ostentator' ('He had the showman's knack of drawing public attention to everything he said or did'). Before the end of 1882 a speech from Lord Randolph Churchill had become an event to the newspaper reader. The worthy, pious, and substantial citizen, hurriedly turning over the pages of his *Times* or still more respectable *Morning Post*, and folding it to his convenience, crouched himself in his most comfortable chair and ate it up line by line with snorts of indignation or gurglings of mirth. 'Look what he says about Gladstone. I wonder the *Times* prints

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such things. How lowering to the dignity of public life! I can't think why they pay so much attention to this young man. Randolph Churchill, indeed — preposterous! Give me the paper back, my dear.'

Speeches are — next to leading articles — the most impermanent of impermanent things. But the character and conceptions of that political movement to the stimulation of which Lord Randolph Churchill devoted his life, and by which he was now to be so swiftly carried forward, cannot be better explained than in his own words; and, moreover, the reader is entitled to have some opportunities of judging for himself. The winter at Blenheim, with its diversions of the Harriers and the Woodstock Railway, seems to have refreshed Lord Randolph's mind and added to his stores of fancy. He emerged from his retirement to plunge into a vehement political campaign. On three successive days in December he delivered at Edinburgh what he called a 'trilogy' of speeches. The first was upon Egypt. Here are its keynotes: —

> The Court of Chancery repudiates loans made by money-lenders to infants even though they may have actually received and spent the money. Far more ought this country, acting as a great Court of Equity, to protect the Egyptians in any efforts they may make to free themselves from this frightful burden [of debt] which is strangling the life out of them — these Egyptians whom Sir Evelyn Wood so eloquently calls the infants of centuries: this burden for the contraction of which they are absolutely innocent, forced upon them by the great money-lenders of the Stock Exchanges of London and Paris. The other day the poor Egyptians were very near

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effecting a successful revolution; they were very near throwing off their suffocating bonds; but, unfortunately for us, Mr. Gladstone, the Prime Minister of Great Britain — Mr. Gladstone, the leader, the idol, the demi-god of the Liberal party — Mr. Gladstone, the member for Midlothian, came upon them with his armies and his fleets, destroyed their towns, devastated their country, slaughtered their thousands, and flung back these struggling wretches into the morass of oppression, back into the toils of their taskmasters. The revolution of Arabi was the movement of a nation; like all revolutions, it had its good side and its bad; you must never, for purposes of practical politics, criticise too minutely the origin, the authors, or the course of revolutions. Would you undo, if you could, the Revolution of 1688, which drove the Stuarts from the throne, because of the intrigues of the nobles and of the clergy? Would you undo the French Revolution because of the Reign of Terror? Would you undo the Revolution of Naples because Garibaldi might not be altogether a man of your mind? You know you would not; you know that those revolutions were justified by atrocious Governments.

. . . . . .

I advocate, in the first place, the expulsion 'bag and baggage' of the Khedive Tewfik, with all 'his Turks and his Circassians, his Zaptiehs and his Mudirs, his Bimbashis and Yuzbashis, his Kaimakams and his Pashas'[1] — no great number of them in all; two or three ships would hold the lot. I advocate the recall of the exiles from Ceylon, the resuscitation of the national party, the formation of a genuine popular Government, at the head of which shall be placed a Prince — either native or European, as you will — who shall be indeed and in truth constitutional, enlightened, and just. I advocate a great re-arrangement and reduction of the Egyptian national debt and a clean sweep of the debts of the victimised, the bankrupt, and the ruined fellaheen. I

[1] A quotation from Mr. Gladstone's famous pamphlet of 1876.

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advocate the placing of Egypt under the guarantee and guardianship of united Europe, so that no one single Power shall be able to exercise there superior influence to another, so that collective authority shall restrain individual ambition. In a word, I advocate — I plead for — the real emancipation of an historic land and the true freedom of an ancient race.

. . . . . .

You will be told that Egypt is the high-road to India, and that Britain must hold it at all costs. This is a terrible and a widespread delusion. Similar delusions have before now led astray the foreign policy of this country. At one time it was 'the balance of power': that has passed away. At another time it was 'the integrity of the Ottoman Empire': that has tumbled into an abandoned and forgotten grave; and now we have 'the high-road to India' will-o'-the-wisp, which in time will vanish too. Egypt is not the high-road to India. The Suez Canal is a commercial route to India, and a good route, too, in time of peace; but it never was, and never could be, a military route for Great Britain in time of war. In time of war there are no well-marked high-roads to and fro across the British Empire. The path of Britain is upon the ocean, her ways lie upon the deep, and you should avoid as your greatest danger any reliance on transcontinental communication, where, at any time, you may have to encounter gigantic military hosts. (Edinburgh, December 18, 1883.)

The second speech dealt with the question of the extension of the franchise, and must be considered in its place. The third foreshadowed the advent of the Home Rule struggle:—

Develop, if you like, in any way you may, the material resources of Ireland. Advance public money on the easiest terms for railways, tramways, canals, roads, labourers' dwellings, fisheries, and objects of that kind. We owe the

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Irish a great deal for our bad government of them in the past; and if we are not stingy, there are few injuries, however deep, which money will not cure. But do not, if you value your life as an Empire, swallow one morsel more of heroic legislation. By giving a continuous support to the Tory party, let the Irish know that, though they cry day and night, though they vex you with much wickedness and harass you with much disorder, though they incessantly divert your attention from your own affairs, though they cause you all manner of trial and trouble, there is one thing you will detect at once, in whatever form or guise it may be presented to you, there is one thing you will never listen to, there is one thing you will never yield — and that is their demand for an Irish Parliament, and that to their yells for the repeal of the Union you answer an unchanging, an unchangeable, and a unanimous 'No.' (Edinburgh, December 20, 1883.)

A month later he spoke at Blackpool. Perhaps this speech affords the best example of his rhetorical methods. Certainly it filled Tory Lancashire with merriment and satisfaction: —

Mr. Chamberlain a short time ago attempted to hold Lord Salisbury up to the execration of the people as one who enjoyed great riches for which he had neither toiled nor spun and he savagely denounced Lord Salisbury and all his class. As a matter of fact, Lord Salisbury from his earliest days has toiled and spun in the service of the State and for the advancement of his countrymen in learning, in wealth, and in prosperity; but no Radical ever yet allowed himself to be embarrassed by a question of fact. Just look, however, at what Mr. Chamberlain himself does. He goes to Newcastle and is entertained at a banquet there, and procures for the president of the feast a live earl, no less a person than the Earl of Durham. Now Lord Durham is a young gentleman who has just come of age, who is in the possession

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of immense hereditary estates, who is well known on Newmarket heath and prominent among the gilded youth who throng the corridors of the Gaiety Theatre, but who has studied politics about as much as Barnum's new white elephant, and upon whose ingenuous mind even the idea of rendering service to the State has not yet commenced to dawn. If by any means it could be legitimate, and I hold that it is illegitimate, to stigmatise any individual as enjoying great riches for which he has neither toiled nor spun, such a case would be the case of the Earl of Durham; and yet it is under the patronage of the Earl of Durham and basking in the smiles of the Earl of Durham, bandying vulgar compliments with the Earl of Durham, that this stern patriot, this rigid moralist, this unbending censor the Right Hon. Joseph Chamberlain, flaunts his Radical and levelling doctrines before the astounded democrats of Newcastle.

After Mr. Chamberlain, Mr. Gladstone: —

'Vanity of vanities,' says the preacher, 'all is vanity.' 'Humbug of humbugs,' says the Radical, 'all is humbug.' Gentlemen, we live in an age of advertisement, the age of Holloway's pills, of Colman's mustard, and of Horniman's pure tea; and the policy of lavish advertisement has been so successful in commerce that the Liberal party, with its usual enterprise, has adapted it to politics. The Prime Minister is the greatest living master of the art of personal political advertisement. Holloway, Colman, and Horniman are nothing compared with him. Every act of his, whether it be for the purposes of health, or of recreation, or of religious devotion, is spread before the eyes of every man, woman, and child in the United Kingdom on large and glaring placards. For the purposes of an autumn holiday a large transatlantic steamer is specially engaged, the Poet-Laureate adorns the suite and receives a peerage as his reward, and the incidents of the voyage are luncheon with the Emperor of Russia and tea with the Queen of Denmark. For the purposes of recreation he has selected the felling of

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trees; and we may usefully remark that his amusements, like his politics, are essentially destructive. Every afternoon the whole world is invited to assist at the crashing fall of some beech or elm or oak. The forest laments, in order that Mr. Gladstone may perspire, and full accounts of these proceedings are forwarded by special correspondents to every daily paper every recurring morning. For the purposes of religious devotion the advertisements grow larger. The parish church at Hawarden is insufficient to contain the thronging multitudes of fly-catchers who flock to hear Mr. Gladstone read the lessons for the day, and the humble parishioners are banished to hospitable Nonconformist tabernacles in order that mankind may be present at the Prime Minister's rendering of Isaiah, or Jeremiah, or the Book of Job. . . .

He proceeded to describe Mr. Gladstone's method of receiving a deputation at Hawarden Castle: —

It has always appeared to me somewhat incongruous and inappropriate that the great chief of the Radical party should reside in a castle. But to proceed. One would have thought that the deputation would have been received in the house, in the study, in the drawing-room, or even in the dining-room. Not at all. That would have been out of harmony with the advertisement 'boom.' Another scene had been arranged. The working men were guided through the ornamental grounds, into the wide-spreading park, strewn with the wreckage and the ruins of the Prime Minister's sport. All around them, we may suppose, lay the rotting trunks of once umbrageous trees: all around them, tossed by the winds, were boughs and bark and withered shoots. They come suddenly on the Prime Minister and Master Herbert, in scanty attire and profuse perspiration, engaged in the destruction of a gigantic oak, just giving its last dying groan. They are permitted to gaze and to worship and adore and, having conducted themselves with exemplary

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propriety, are each of them presented with a few chips as a memorial of that memorable scene.

Is not this, I thought to myself as I read the narrative, a perfect type and emblem of Mr. Gladstone's government of the Empire? The working classes of this country in 1880 sought Mr. Gladstone. He told them that he would give them and all other subjects of the Queen much legislation, great prosperity, and universal peace; and he has given them nothing but chips. Chips to the faithful allies in Afghanistan, chips to the trusting native races of South Africa, chips to the Egyptian fellah, chips to the British farmer, chips to the manufacturer and the artisan, chips to the agricultural labourer, chips to the House of Commons itself. To all who leaned upon Mr. Gladstone, who trusted in him, and who hoped for something from him — chips, nothing but chips — hard, dry, unnourishing, indigestible chips. . . .

Gradually the tone changed as the speaker passed from ridicule to serious attack: —

The other startling advertisement I wish to allude to was as follows: 'Hawarden Castle. — The Prime Minister attended divine service this morning. He was guarded as usual.' 'Guarded as usual!' 'As usual!' Gracious Heavens! what a commentary on Liberal government in those two words, 'as usual'! Do you know that from the days when first what is called a Prime Minister was invented to the present, there has been no Prime Minister about whom such a statement could be made? Many Prime Ministers have come and gone, good, bad, and indifferent; but the best and the worst have never been guarded by aught else save the English people. And has it come to this? Are the times so terrible, are bad passions so rife and unrestrained, after four years of Liberal rule, that the apostle of freedom, the benefactor of his country, the man for whom no flattery is too fulsome, no homage too servile, cannot attend divine service in his parish church without

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being 'guarded as usual'? Surely a world of serious reflection is opened up; surely the art of government must have sunk to a very low ebb when the first servant of the Crown has to be watched night and day by alguazils armed to the teeth. I hope and pray that they will guard him well, for it would be an indelible stain on our name and our fame if a man who has spent fifty years of his life in the service of the State, were to be the victim of an infamous assassin. But I ask myself, are we to blame humanity for this state of things? Is our civilisation all in vain? Is Christianity but a phantom and a fiction? Is human nature the awful and incurable cause? Surely not. It is more natural to blame the policy of the statesmen who, to possess themselves of power, to overthrow a hated rival, set class against class and race against race; who use their eloquence for no nobler purpose than to lash into frenzy the needy and the discontented; who for party purposes are ready to deride morality and paralyse law; who, to gain a few votes either in Parliament or in a borough, ally themselves equally with the atheist or with the rebel, and who lightly arouse and lightly spring from one delirium of the multitude to another in order to maintain themselves at a giddy and a perilous height. (Blackpool, January 24, 1884.)

A few days later it became known that Lord Randolph Churchill had accepted the invitation of the Birmingham Conservatives to contest that city with Colonel Burnaby at the General Election against Mr. Bright and Mr. Chamberlain. This unfurling of the Tory flag in the very heart and centre of militant and organised Radicalism and against the most famous and the most active of Radical leaders aroused the keenest interest among Conservative working men all over the country. The Tories of Birmingham had long been powerless under the rule

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of their opponents. For years they had scarcely been allowed to hold a political meeting. Almost every avenue of civic life and even of municipal employment was closed against them. Now the fighting leader of Tory Democracy was coming to their deliverance. It is impossible to describe the enthusiasm which his bold challenge excited, or the encouragement which it spread through the mass of the Conservative party. The newspapers were filled with cartoons of 'Jack the Giant-killer' or of a diminutive David going forth to battle with a vast screw-bearing Goliath. The mention of his name, or any reference to the contest on which he had entered, drew forth the loudest cheers at every Tory meeting. Letters of gratitude, resolutions of confidence and support, poured in upon him from all parts of the country.

Before actually descending upon Birmingham he sounded a trumpet-call of defiance from Woodstock. He attacked Mr. Bright and Mr. Chamberlain with an impartial and unmeasured ferocity: —

> The battle which Mr. Bright has rashly challenged shall be fought *sans trève ni merci*. The savage animosity which Mr. Bright has breathed into his speeches, has raised a corresponding spirit among his opponents. The robe of righteousness with which he and his confederates have clothed their squalid and corrupted forms shall be torn asunder; naked and ashamed shall they be beheld by all the intelligent public, and all shall be disclosed which can be, whether it be the impostor, and the so-called 'people's tribune,' or the grinding monopolies of Mr. Chamberlain, or the dark and evil deeds of Mr. Schnadhorst.

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A positive fury was excited in Radical Birmingham by these and similar words. The political predominance of the Liberal party had been overwhelming and absolutely unbroken in the whole history of the city since the Reform Bill had enfranchised it. All kinds of criticism had been suppressed in all kinds of ways and those who had attempted to voice the opinion of the minority, had found it best to do so with a prudent politeness. Here was insult in profusion, gross, elaborate, and designed. 'The mode of warfare,' observed Lord Randolph, 'of the Radical party resembles that adopted by savage tribes who endeavour to terrify their opponents by horrid yells and resounding exclamations. I observe that the reports of the speeches of Mr. Bright and Mr. Chamberlain on Tuesday were interspersed with "loud and prolonged groans," "groans," "hisses," "renewed hisses," and "roars of laughter" and such like. These resources will no doubt frighten any person of weak nerves and are calculated to make old women and children run away. But the Tory party in Birmingham, many thousands strong, will preserve its composure and the candidate whom they have put forward, will not be intimidated one little bit.'

Upon April 15 Lord Randolph Churchill opened his campaign in Birmingham in two speeches delivered on successive nights. He was a man of many styles. The arguments which he submitted to the electors were the sincere expression of his deepest convictions; they were in perfect harmony with the

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whole of his political life and work, but they were strange arguments for a Tory to employ: —

I am not here to deny the services which the Radical party have rendered to English civilisation. I believe that the present generation is considerably indebted to the struggles which were carried on five-and-twenty and thirty years ago by those who were then designated the Philosophical Radicals. They enlarged the boundaries of freedom, they removed religious and civil disabilities, they brought the Constitution into the home and the cottage of the artisan, and they taught the people that there were in the political life of monarchies and nations higher and nobler aims than the perpetual waging of wars or constant striving after territorial aggrandisement. The student of English history, fairly recognising these lofty results, will not be concerned to discover or disclose the faults and the follies — and, indeed, I may say the absurdities — which the Philosophical Radicals mingled with their creed. Here in Birmingham, amongst your fathers and forefathers, those men found their home, their mainstay, and their trusting friends. But parties, like Empires and like all human combinations, wax and wane. The law of perpetual change, which is the motive principle of the Radical, exercises its fatal effect upon the Radical himself. . . .

What was the great motto which expressed all their principles, which enabled the Radical party of old days to guide and control the course of events, to make and unmake Ministers and Governments, to win and retain the confidence of mighty cities such as yours? 'Peace, Retrenchment, and Reform!' — in other words, Non-intervention, Rigid Economy, and genuine Progressive Legislation. And so long as they adhered to those great rocks with the tenacity of limpets, so long was their good name secure — so long was their wisdom undoubted; and year by year they could appear before you with clean hands and clear consciences to ask from you a renewal of your confidence. Chancellors of the Exchequer, Secretaries to the

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Treasury and of public departments, groaned under the tyrannical economy of Mr. Hume, but were uncommonly careful to give him as little handle as possible for what they arrogantly called his cheese-paring mania. The genius and influence of Mr. Cobden exercised a diminishing effect upon the estimates of the War and Navy Ministers; and Mr. Bright and Mr. Milner Gibson either averted or effectually censured unjust and unnecessary war.

The Radical party of those days, he went on, was few in number, with no representatives in the Government and no Caucus in the country. 'It was their great principles,' exclaimed the speaker, 'which gave them power, and which they asserted with obstinacy, irrespective of party, on all occasions, small or great.' And now — with half a dozen Radicals in the Ministry and nearly a hundred members in the House — What had been the course of events? In 1880 a war in Afghanistan protracted for a whole year under a Liberal Government; in 1881 the revolt of the Boers, 'with which every Radical in England was bound to sympathise,' met by force of arms, disgracefully and unsuccessfully applied; in 1882 'the struggle for Egyptian freedom undertaken by Arabi Pasha, suppressed by Liberals, great towns destroyed, bloody battles fought; and estimates swollen nine millions beyond those of Lord Beaconsfield's Administration.'

And what would be the policy of the Conservative party if power were placed in their hands?

I have no right, a humble member of the rank and file of the Tory party, to declare to a great meeting like this what will be their policy. I do not know what will be the

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policy of the Tory party. I am not the least bit in the confidence of the leaders, and I must admit that I do not enjoy the high honour of their friendship. Only the other night one of them accused me in the House of Commons of being in secret and fraudulent alliance with the Prime Minister for the destruction of the Tory party. I have not been able to gather from their speeches or their acts what would be the policy they would adopt if the responsibility of government was placed upon them. They have preserved a prudent, perhaps an over-prudent, reticence. But though I cannot tell you what their policy will be, I think I can tell you what their policy ought to be — and in general terms what I will try and make it to be — if ever I should represent this powerful constituency. It shall be a policy of honesty and courage. It shall be a policy which will grapple with difficulties and deal with them, and not avoid them or postpone them. It shall be a popular policy, and not a class policy. It shall be a policy of activity for the national welfare, combined with a zeal for Imperial security.

The Tory democratic movement in the English boroughs was powerfully aided by and largely interwoven with the spread of Fair Trade doctrines. In Lancashire especially the persuasive arguments of Mr. Farrer Ecroyd had gained a wide acceptance, and twenty years have not effaced the effects of his exertions. Lord Randolph Churchill, eager to attack the Liberal Government, began in 1881 by urging the Fair Trade cause with characteristic vigour and happy irresponsibility. As his influence and knowledge increased, his assurance upon fiscal matters diminished; and at Blackpool in 1884 he would not commit himself beyond an 'inquiry into the present condition of British industry and as to how it is

affected by our present methods of raising revenue for the service of the State.' But certainly no one could have painted in more vivid colours the shocking and melancholy condition of British trade. The words have been often quoted: — 1884 Æt. 35

What is the state of things in the world of British industry? We are suffering from a depression of trade extending as far back as 1874, ten years of trade depression, and the most hopeful either among our capitalists or our artisans can discover no signs of a revival. Your iron industry is dead, dead as mutton; your coal industries, which depend greatly on the iron industries, are languishing. Your silk industry is dead, assassinated by the foreigner. Your woollen industry is *in articulo mortis*, gasping, struggling. Your cotton industry is seriously sick. The shipbuilding industry, which held out longest of all, is come to a standstill. Turn your eyes where you will, survey any branch of British industry you like, you will find signs of mortal disease. The self-satisfied Radical philosophers will tell you it is nothing; they point to the great volume of British trade. Yes, the volume of British trade is still large, but it is a volume which is no longer profitable; it is working and struggling. So do the muscles and nerves of the body of a man who has been hanged twitch and work violently for a short time after the operation. But death is there all the same, life has utterly departed, and suddenly comes the *rigor mortis*. Well, but with this state of British industry what do you find going on? You find foreign iron, foreign wool, foreign silk and cotton pouring into the country, flooding you, drowning you, sinking you, swamping you; your labour market is congested, wages have sunk below the level of life, the misery in our large towns is too frightful to contemplate, and emigration or starvation is the remedy which the Radicals offer you with the most undisturbed complacency. But what produced this state of

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things? Free imports? I am not sure; I should like an inquiry; but I suspect free imports of the murder of our industries much in the same way as if I found a man standing over a corpse and plunging his knife into it I should suspect that man of homicide, and I should recommend a coroner's inquest and a trial by jury. (Blackpool, January 24, 1884.)

In any case, even if free imports were a wise policy, he would not allow Mr. Bright and the Liberal party the credit of the discovery: —

Mr. Bright advised his audience at Birmingham to read over again the speeches of Mr. Charles Villiers on Free Trade made fifty years ago. I advise them to do nothing of the kind, because if they do they will lose every shred of veneration and respect which they still may feel for the name of Mr. Bright. They will find that the great battle of Free Trade, of which Mr. Bright has never been tired of boasting loud and long, was fought by Mr. Charles Villiers long before Mr. Bright made his appearance in public; that Mr. Charles Villiers bore the burden and heat of that protracted and lengthened contest; and when Mr. Villiers had won the day Mr. Bright and his dear friend Mr. Cobden stepped in and tried to rob him of all his glory. All those who read Mr. Charles Villiers's speeches will find that Mr. Bright and his dear friend Mr. Cobden were nothing more nor less than two plundering cuckoos, who shamefully ejected Mr. Charles Villiers from the nest which he had constructed, and who reared therein their own chattering and silly brood. (Woodstock, January 31, 1884.)

After all this the Fair Traders were not unnaturally inclined to complain when in 1887 — three years afterwards — Lord Randolph Churchill having acquired a responsible position, having studied the report of the Commission on Trade appointed largely at his

insistence in 1885, having reflected upon the voting of the counties in the General Election, and surveyed the problems of finance from the Treasury chambers, poured buckets of cold water on their cherished schemes and declined to make any exertions in their support. 1884 Æt. 35

But the central proposition of the Tory Democratic idea was that the Conservative party was willing and thoroughly competent to deal with the needs of democracy and the multiplying problems of modern life; and that the British Constitution, so far from being incompatible with the social progress of the great mass of the people, was in itself a flexible instrument by which that progress might be guided and secured.

The Whigs are a class with the prejudices and the vices of a class; the Radicals are a sect with the tyranny and the fanaticism of a sect. . . . The Whigs tell you that the institutions of this kingdom, as illustrated by the balance of Queen, Lords and Commons, and the Established Church, are but conveniences and useful commodities, which may be safely altered, modified, or even abolished, so long as the alteration, modification, or abolition is left to the Whigs to carry out. The Radicals tell you that these institutions are hideous, poisonous, and degrading, and that the divine Caucus is the only machine which can turn out, as if it was a patent medicine, the happiness of humanity. But the Tories, who are of the people, know and exclaim that these institutions, which are not so much the work of the genius of man, but rather the inspired offspring of Time, are the tried guarantees of individual liberty, popular government, and Christian morality; that they are the only institutions which possess the virtue of stability, of stability even through all ages; that the harmonious fusion of classes and

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interests which they represent corresponds with and satisfies the highest aspirations either of peoples or of men; that by them has our Empire been founded and extended in the past; and that by them alone can it prosper or be maintained in the future. Such is the Tory party and such are its principles, by which it can give to England the government she requires — democratic, aristocratic, Parliamentary, monarchical, uniting in an indissoluble embrace religious liberty and social order. And this party — this Tory party of to-day — exists by the favour of no caucus, nor for the selfish interests of any class. Its motto is — 'Of the people, for the people, by the people'; unity and freedom are the beacons which shed their light around its future path and amid all political conflict this shall be its only aim — to increase and to secure within imperishable walls the historic happiness of English homes. (Blackpool, January 24, 1884.)

Again and again in these years of strife Lord Randolph Churchill returned to this central idea: —

The foundation [of the British Constitution] is totally new, purely modern, absolutely untried. You have changed the old foundation. You have gone to a new foundation. Your new foundation is a great seething and swaying mass of some five million electors, who have it in their power, if they should so please, by the mere heave of the shoulders, if they only act with moderate unanimity, to sweep away entirely the three ancient institutions and put anything they like in their place, and to alter profoundly, and perhaps for a time altogether ruin, the interests of the three hundred million beings who are committed to their charge. That is, I say, a state of things unparalleled in history. And how do you think it will all end? Are we being swept along a turbulent and irresistible torrent which is bearing us towards some political Niagara, in which every mortal thing we now know will be twisted and smashed beyond all recognition? Or are we, on the other hand, gliding passively along

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a quiet river of human progress that will lead us to some undiscovered ocean of almost superhuman development? Who can tell? . . . My state of mind when these great problems come across me — which is very rarely — is one of wonder, or perhaps I should rather say of admiration and of hope, because the alternative state of mind would be one of terror and despair. And I am guarded from that latter state of mind by a firm belief in the essential goodness of life, and in the evolution, by some process or other which I do not exactly know and cannot determine, of a higher and nobler humanity. But, above all, my especial safeguard against such a state of mental annihilation and mental despair is my firm belief in the ascertained and much-tried common sense which is the peculiarity of the English people. That is the faith which, I think, ought to animate and protect you in your political future; that is the faith of the Tory democracy in which I shall ever abide. (Cambridge University Carlton, June 6, 1885.)

. . . . . .

'Trust the people' — I have long tried to make that my motto; but I know, and will not conceal, that there are still a few in our party who have that lesson yet to learn and who have yet to understand that the Tory party of to-day is no longer identified with that small and narrow class which is connected with the ownership of land; but that its great strength can be found, and must be developed, in our large towns as well as in our country districts. Yes, trust the people. You, who are ambitious, and rightly ambitious, of being the guardians of the British Constitution, trust the people, and they will trust you — and they will follow you and join you in the defence of that Constitution against any and every foe. I have no fear of democracy. I do not fear minorities; I do not care for those checks and securities which Mr. Goschen seems to think of such importance. Modern checks and securities are not worth a brass farthing. Give me a fair arrangement of the con-

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stituencies, and one part of England will correct and balance the other. (Birmingham, April 16, 1884.)

And in later years, after the battle had been won, and when the Tory leaders had already begun to look upon their new supporters as if they were an inalienable asset: —

I cannot but feel that we have nearly realised what was some years ago apparently only a dream, the dream of Tory Democracy. You remember with what scoffs and scornings and with what sneers and ridicule the phrase 'Tory Democracy' was received when I first made use of it in the House of Commons in the year 1882. Nothing was too bad, nothing was too taunting, nothing was too absurd to apply to the idea or to those who dared to sustain such an idea in public. You in Birmingham were the first publicly to associate yourselves with the policy which is contained in the phrase 'Tory Democracy.' What is Tory Democracy? Tory Democracy is a democracy which supports the Tory party; but with this important qualification, that it supports a Tory party, not from mere caprice, not from momentary disgust or indignation with the results of Radicalism, but a democracy which supports the Tory party because it has been taught by experience and by knowledge to believe in the excellence and the soundness of true Tory principles. But Tory Democracy involves also another idea of equal importance. It involves the idea of a Government who in all branches of their policy and in all features of their administration are animated by lofty and by Liberal ideas. That is Tory Democracy. (Birmingham, April 9, 1888.)

One more quotation — Lord Randolph's defence of the Established Church — shall close this chapter. The speech from which it is taken was delivered in the course of his Birmingham campaign and comprised

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a general vindication of the British Constitution. Let it be remembered that in those days the demand for organic change was real and fierce. The vast unsounded problems of Collectivism and Individualism, the intricate and varying relations between Capital and Labour, the almost limitless power of combined or accumulated wealth and the racial deterioration produced by civilised poverty, were issues which might be considered by philosophers or fought out between master and man but which approached only remotely the Parliamentary and political arena. Disputes about forms of government still absorbed the activities of democracy; and the hall-mark of a good Radical in the 'eighties was secular republicanism: —

I see in the Church of England an immense and omnipresent ramification of machinery working without cost to the people — and daily and hourly lifting the masses of the people, rich and poor alike, from the dead and dreary level of the lowest and most material cares of life, up to the comfortable contemplation of higher and serener forms of existence and of destiny. I see in the Church of England a centre and a source and a guide of charitable effort, mitigating by its mendicant importunity the violence of human misery, whether mental or physical, and contributing to the work of alleviation from its own not superfluous resources. And I urge upon you not to throw that source of charity upon the haphazard almsgiving of a busy and a selfish world. I view the Church of England eagerly co-operating in the work of national education, not only benefiting your children, but saving your pockets; and I remember that it has been the work of the Church to pour forth floods of knowledge, purely secular and scientific, even from the days when knowledge was not; and I warn you

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against hindering the diffusion of knowledge, inspired by religion, amongst those who will have devolved upon them the responsibility for the government of this wide Empire.

But I own that my chief reason for supporting the Church of England I find in the fact that, when compared with other creeds and other sects, it is essentially the Church of religious liberty. Whether in one direction or another, it is continually possessed by the ambition, not of excluding, but of including, all shades of religious thought, all sorts and conditions of men; and, standing out like a lighthouse over a stormy ocean, it marks the entrance to a port where the millions and the masses of those who are wearied at times with the woes of the world, and troubled often by the trials of existence, may search for and may find that peace which passeth all understanding. I cannot, and will not, allow myself to believe that the English people, who are not only naturally religious, but also eminently practical, will ever consent, for the petty purpose of gratifying sectarian animosity, or for the wretched object of pandering to infidel proclivities — will ever consent to deprive themselves of so abundant a fountain of aid and consolation, or acquiesce in the demolition of an institution which elevates the life of the nation, and consecrates the acts of the State. (Birmingham, April 16, 1884.)

'The work of inspiring a beaten and depressed party with hope and courage,' wrote Mr. Jennings in 1888,[1] 'was substantially left to one man.' What had become meanwhile of the acknowledged leaders of Toryism? Where were the names which in after years were to fill the newspapers and the Government offices? It is curious to reflect that all this time, while Lord Randolph Churchill was straining every nerve in the service of his party, he was the object of almost

[1] Preface to Lord Randolph Churchill's speeches, by L. J. Jennings, p. xxiv.

passionate jealousy and dislike in its high places. The world of rank and fashion had long been hostile to him. The prominent people and party officials who formed and guided opinion at the Carlton Club, on the Front Opposition Bench, and in the central Conservative offices, regarded him with aversion and alarm. They could not understand him. Still less could they explain his growing influence. He was as unwelcome and insoluble a riddle to them as ever Disraeli had been. To them he seemed an intruder, an upstart, a mutineer who flouted venerable leaders and mocked at constituted authority with a mixture of aristocratic insolence and democratic brutality. By what warrant did he pronounce in accents of command on all the controverted questions of the day, when men grey in the service of the State, long installed in the headship of the party, held their peace or dealt in platitude and ambiguity? By what strange madness of the hour had this youth who derided Radicals for abandoning their principles and preached Liberalism from Tory platforms, gained acceptance throughout the land? The Conservative benches were rich in staid, substantial merchants and worthy squires. They had their blameless young men of good family and exemplary deportment who never gave the party Whips an anxious moment and used their talents only to discover what 'older and therefore wiser' people would wish to have them say. Why was no honour shown to them? Did not they address meetings in the provinces? Did they not utter sentiments to which every sensible and patriotic man might listen with

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unruffled contentment? And no one marked them! Was there not enough in these evil days to bear from Mr. Gladstone and his legions, without this turbulent uprising in their own ranks?

In truth, at this crisis in their fortunes the Conservative party were rescued in spite of themselves. A very little and they would never have won the new democracy. But for a narrow chance they might have slipped down into the gulf of departed systems. The forces of wealth and rank, of land and Church, must always have exerted vast influence in whatever confederacy they had been locked. Alliances or fusions with Whigs and moderate Liberals must from time to time have secured them spells of office. But the Tory party might easily have failed to gain any support among the masses. They might have lost their hold upon the new foundation of power; and the cleavage in British politics must have become a social, not a political, division — upon a line horizontal, not oblique.

There are, without doubt, some who will be inclined to think that no element of the heroic enters into these conflicts, and that political triumphs are necessarily tarnished by vulgar methods. The noise and confusion of election crowds, the cant of phrase and formula, the burrowings of rival Caucuses, fill with weariness, and even terror, persons of exquisite sensibility. It is easy for those who take no part in the public duties of citizenship under a democratic dispensation to sniff disdainfully at the methods of modern politics and to console

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themselves for a lack of influence upon the course of events by the indulgence of a fastidious refinement and a meticulous consistency. But it is a poor part to play. Amid the dust and brawling, with rude weapons and often unworthy champions, a real battle for real and precious objects is swaying to and fro. Better far the clamour of popular disputation, with all its most blatant accessories, hammering out from month to month and year to year the laboured progress of the common people in a work-a-day world, than the poetic tragedies and violence of chivalric ages. The splintering of lances and clashing of swords are not the only tests by which the natural captains and princes among men can be known. The spirit and emotions of war do not depend upon the weapons or conditions of the conflict. A bold heart, a true eye — clear, plain, decided leading — count none the less, although no blood is spilled. 'To rally the people round the Throne,' cried Lord Randolph Churchill, 'to unite the Throne with the people, a loyal Throne and a patriotic people — that is our policy and that is our faith.' Much of the work that he did, was turned to purposes very different from his own. His political doctrines were not free from error and contradiction. But he accomplished no mean or temporary achievement in so far as he restored the healthy balance of parties, and caused the ancient institutions of the British realm once again to be esteemed among the masses of the British people.

CHAPTER VII

THE PARTY MACHINE

'There is rarely any rising, but by a commixture of good and evil arts.'—BACON.

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IN the spring of 1883 Lord Randolph Churchill had invited Lord Salisbury to come forward and head the Tory Democratic movement. In the autumn he determined to persevere alone. The enterprise which he had matured during his retirement at Blenheim was perhaps the most daring on which he ever embarked. It has been stated that he cherished no smaller design than the 'wholesale capture of the Conservative party organisation.' How far in his secret heart he was determined to go cannot be known; but it is certain that he now set to work deliberately upon a twofold plan — first, to obtain the control of the National Union of Conservative Associations; and secondly to secure for that body substantial authority and financial independence.

Nothing but Lord Randolph Churchill's undisputed predominance in debate and his unequalled popularity in the country could have sustained him against the forces which he had determined to

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engage. From one motive or another, from conscientious and perfectly intelligible distrust, from vulgar jealousy, from respect for discipline and authority, from a dull resentment at the disturbance he created, nearly all the most influential Conservatives in the House of Commons and the Carlton Club were leagued against him. Lord Salisbury was hostile to him. Sir Stafford Northcote had good reason to be so. All the old men who had sat in the late Cabinet, were alarmed; all the new men who hoped to sit in the next, were envious of his surprising rise to power. Scarcely a name can be mentioned of those who had held office in the past or were to hold it in the future, which was not at this time arrayed against him. And with all of them he was now to come into violent collision.

With the beginnings of this intricate conflict around the party machinery the Fourth Party entered upon its final phase. It had grown out of a House of Commons comradeship amid the Bradlaugh debates. It had soon become the centre and soul of opposition to Mr. Gladstone's Government. It had next been drawn into a vehement effort to displace Sir Stafford Northcote from his primacy in Conservative councils and instal Lord Salisbury in his stead. In all this Mr. Balfour may be said to have worked with the Fourth Party more or less formally and to have sympathised generally and even cordially with their aims. But in the process of fighting several unexpected things had happened. A new

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political situation was created; new forces had been awakened; a new leader was at hand.

Mr. Gorst and Sir Henry Wolff declared themselves ready to follow Lord Randolph Churchill further. Mr. Balfour immediately diverged. Although during the fight for the party machine he continued nominally to act with the Fourth Party and remained on friendly terms with its members, he now began to oppose Lord Randolph Churchill. He spoke against him in the House of Commons. He canvassed against him in the National Union Council. It has been suggested[1] that Mr. Balfour's course at this time was open to the reproach of disingenuousness. Certainly Lord Randolph Churchill's correspondence lends no support to such a charge. He liked Mr. Balfour as a companion. He did not consider him formidable as an opponent. He was delighted to bear the evils of his antagonism for the pleasure of his society. Moreover, he saw quite clearly that Mr. Balfour's main political sympathy was inseparably attached to Lord Salisbury. To come into conflict with Lord Salisbury was to come into conflict with Mr. Balfour. The difference was natural, inevitable, and legitimate; and no doubt, while it lasted, Lord Randolph was careful to confine his conversation with his friend only to those subjects upon which they were still able to co-operate.

After the electoral disaster of 1880 a meeting had

[1] Mr. Harold Gorst's articles, *Nineteenth Century*, November and December, 1902.

been held at Bridgewater House, under the auspices of Lord Beaconsfield, to examine the causes of defeat. A committee, formed chiefly of members of the Carlton Club, had been appointed to consider various methods of reforming, popularising, and improving the party organisation. This committee was never dissolved. It continued to exist, and under the title of the 'Central Committee' assumed the direction and management of all party affairs and controlled the large funds subscribed for party purposes. The National Union of Conservative Associations, upon the other hand, was a body formed on a basis of popular representation. Its branches had spread all over the country and its membership included many of the more active local leaders of the Conservative party in the great towns. It was, however, deprived of all share in party government by the Central Committee and jealously excluded from possessing any financial independence. Mr. Gorst was already its Vice-President and had long exercised an influence sustained by an unrivalled knowledge of party machinery. Sir Henry Wolff was one of its original members. But Lord Randolph Churchill's election by co-optation to a seat upon that body in 1882 had led to an unprecedented division of opinion. His personal antagonists had banded themselves together and attacked him upon various ingenious pretexts. One gentleman undertook to prove from elaborately prepared and complicated statistics that the member for Woodstock was a Fenian. Another endeavoured to

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convince the Council that he was a devoted slave of Mr. Chamberlain — apparently on the curious ground that he had voted against a plan for making a Channel Tunnel. When the Council had divided, the numbers for and against him were exactly equal. The duty of giving a casting-vote fell upon the Chairman. Although consistently hostile to Tory Democracy in all its forms and representatives, Lord Percy refused to use his vote to exclude a distinguished opponent and Lord Randolph Churchill had thus been elected.

The three faithful members of the Fourth Party were thus brought together. They were not alone or unsupported. The discussions of a year had disclosed unmistakable discontent on the part of a powerful section of the National Union. Many active local politicians — men claiming to speak upon the Council in the name of some of the greatest cities in England — were profoundly dissatisfied both with the conduct of the Opposition and the organisation of the party. They resented their utter lack of influence over either. Themselves above, or at least outside, the jealousies and cabals of the House of Commons, they regarded the free-lances below the gangway as the best fighting men in the Conservative ranks and they looked with enthusiasm to Lord Randolph Churchill as the one man who could revive the failing fortunes of their party and beard the majestic authority of the Prime Minister. It was by the unwavering support of a majority of these gentlemen that Lord Randolph's

power upon the Council was maintained through the struggles that followed. 1883 Æt. 34

'The National Union,' writes Sir Michael Hicks-Beach, 'was galvanised into life by a desire very prevalent in the party outside the House of Commons — or, at least, in the democratic part of it — to support the more active policy in Opposition of which Lord Randolph was the type, and by the personal differences which were necessarily connected with that subject.'

During the year 1883 Lord Randolph's position on the Council had been one of influence but not of power. The selection of Birmingham as the scene of the Conference of 1883 was a circumstance especially favourable to him. He resolved to seize the opportunity. 'I have seen Gorst,' he wrote (September 28, 1883) to Sir Henry Wolff, 'and arranged with him that at the meeting of the delegates at Birmingham I am to declare war against the Central Committee and advocate the placing of all power and finance in the hands of the Council of the National Union. This will be a bold step — the Austerlitz of the Fourth Party; but I fancy I may be able to put my views in a manner which will carry the delegates.'

These anticipations were fully sustained at the Conference on October 2. Lord Randolph laid his case before the delegates with the utmost candour. He reminded them of the differences his former election to the Council had occasioned. He wished them quite clearly to understand what his course

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would be if he were elected again. He denounced the Central Committee, which he justly declared had arrogated to itself powers, it was never intended to possess and was incompetent to exercise. He described the National Union as kept by this committee 'in a state of tutelage, if not of slavery,' and its delegates as 'solemnly invited year by year to elect a Council which does not advise and an Executive which does not administer.'

'I wish,' he said, 'to see the control and guidance of the organisation of the Tory party transferred from a self-elected body to an annually elected body. I wish to see the management of the financial resources of our party transferred from an irresponsible body to a responsible body. I say that this so-called Central Committee is an irresponsible and self-elected body and that the Council of the National Union is a responsible and an annually elected body, and I wish the control of the party organisation to be in the hands of the National Union and taken out of the hands of the Central Committee. There is no instance in history of power, placed in the hands of a self-constituted and irresponsible body, being used otherwise than unwisely at first and corruptly at last. . . . I hold it is of the last importance that all finance should be collected and administered by your Council. The corrupt practices at the last General Election on our own side, when the organisation was directed by a secret and irresponsible Committee, were so grave and flagrant that our party in Parliament were absolutely prevented from exposing the

graver and more flagrant corrupt practices of the Liberal party. . . . I should like all the finances of the Tory party to be open for inspection for anyone who may wish to look at them, be he friend or foe. Where you allow secret expenditure you will certainly have corrupt expenditure; and where you have corrupt expenditure you will have vitiated elections, disfranchised boroughs, party disgrace, and public scandal. . . . 1883 Æt. 34

'There is another point. The great bulk of the Tory party throughout the country is composed of artisans and labouring classes. They are directly represented here to-day; they are always directly represented on your Council; no party management can be effective and healthy unless the great labouring classes are directly represented on the Executive of the party. I hope before long to see Tory working men in Parliament. . . .

'Now some of our friends in the party have a lesson to learn which they do not seem disposed to learn. The Conservative party will never exercise power until it has gained the confidence of the working classes; and the working classes are quite determined to govern themselves, and will not be either driven or hoodwinked by any class or class interests. Our interests are perfectly safe if we trust them fully, frankly, and freely; but if we oppose them and endeavour to drive them and hoodwink them, our interests, our Constitution, and all we love and revere will go down. If you want to gain the confidence of the working classes, let them have a share

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and a large share — a real share and not a sham share — in your party Councils and in your party government. . . .

'I would bespeak your earnest consideration of this grave question of party organisation. Whatever your judgment may be, I shall humbly acquiesce in it. If you are satisfied with the present arrangements, if you think the National Union possesses the power to which it has a right, if you think that things are going well with us and that the future is sure and promising — well then, so do I. But if, on the other hand, you are of opinion, after careful consideration of events since 1880, that we have not yet learnt enough from the experience of the past to avoid disaster in time to come; if you think that we have not yet set our house in order, that we are not as well prepared for battle as we ought to be; if you are dissatisfied and distrustful of our present arrangements and anxious about the prospects of our party; if you are ready to consider and carry out needful and timely reforms — well then, so am I.'

'We had a real triumph,' wrote Mr. Gorst to Sir Henry Wolff (October 3), 'at Birmingham yesterday in carrying without division a resolution directing a new Council to take steps to secure for the National Union "its legitimate influence in the party organisation." They got ***, ***, and *** and a whole bevy of Goats to attend; but Randolph, who was received by the delegates with a regular ovation, made a capital speech attacking the Central Committee and carried all before him. The election, however, went

off badly. Clarke, Chaplin, Claud Hamilton, and a lot of other hostile men got elected and it will require the greatest care and skill in the selection and election of the twelve co-optated members to secure us the necessary working majority.' 1883 Æt. 34

Lord Randolph's own account was laconic: —

Lord Randolph Churchill to Sir Henry Wolff.

October 3, 1883.

Dear Wolff, — The proceedings yesterday were interesting and, on the whole, satisfactory, but I could not give you an account of them in a letter — it would be far too long. I shall be in town on Saturday, when you must dine with me. Tell Gorst I expect him too, and you will hear all about the infant Caucus. The Goats yesterday had got wind of our proceedings and came down in great numbers. Ashmead Bartlett also went dead against us and 'entravéd' our schemes to some extent. I made my remarks, which appeared to me not to displease the Assembly, though they must have been poison to the Goats. R——, who was present at the beginning, sniffing a row, prudently recollected he had an engagement and withdrew.

Yours faithfully,

Randolph S. Churchill.

The consequences of the unsatisfactory election were evident in the protracted and evenly-balanced conflict which broke out at once upon the new Council. The twelve co-optated members seem to have been upon the whole favourable to Lord Randolph. Some of them were men of such influence in the large towns that the Orthodox Conservatives did not care to oppose them. No doubt much forethought had also been exercised in their

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selection. At any rate, from that moment Tory Democracy secured a small but solid majority upon the Council.

The first meeting was upon December 7. Lord Randolph moved for an Organisation Committee to consider the best means of carrying into effect the rider passed at the annual conference. A Committee was accordingly appointed. It consisted principally of Lord Randolph Churchill's friends. Its first act was to exclude the honorary secretaries of the Council from its deliberations and to elect Lord Randolph its Chairman. It next resolved unanimously to seek an interview with Lord Salisbury, and the Chairman was instructed to write to him with that purpose.

Nothing could exceed the politeness with which the correspondence opened. Lord Randolph Churchill recounted the events of the Birmingham conference and the formation of the new Organising Committee, and he requested on their behalf the honour of an interview with the leader of the party. Lord Salisbury replied that it would give him great pleasure to confer with members of the National Union upon any subject which, in their judgment, was of importance to party interests. Some delay was caused through the Christmas holiday; but the meeting took place early in January and was friendly in its character.

When, however, the Council of the National Union met on February 1, Lord Percy complained that Lord Randolph Churchill should have been elected to the Chair of the Organisation Com-

mittee, as it had always been the custom for the Chairman of the Council to preside at all Committees at which he was present. Mr. Chaplin then moved that Lord Percy be requested to resume his position as Chairman of the Organisation Committee. Other motions of a similar character were made. All were rejected by the Council after close divisions, and Lord Percy thereupon resigned the chairmanship. Although Lord Randolph Churchill subsequently himself proposed and carried a unanimous vote of confidence in him, he declined to withdraw his resignation. Lord Randolph Churchill and Mr. Chaplin were then respectively proposed for the vacant office, and Lord Randolph was elected by seventeen votes to fifteen. But Lord Salisbury, ignoring this decision, continued to communicate with the Council through Lord Percy, and the majority was greatly offended thereby. 1884 ÆT. 35

On February 29 Lord Salisbury, as he had promised, wrote a formal letter to the Organisation Committee setting forth the views of the party leaders upon the powers and duties of the Council of the National Union: —

Lord Salisbury to Lord Randolph Churchill.

20, Arlington Street: February 29, 1884.

My Lord, — I have the honour to acknowledge your letter of the 17th. The pressure of public business must be my apology for not having sent you an earlier reply.

Sir Stafford Northcote and I have carefully considered the matters which you mentioned at the small meeting which took place here in January. Our task has been rendered

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more difficult by the circumstance that no proposals were put forward on the part of the National Union. Their communication was confined to the representation that, possessing an efficient organisation, and consisting, as it undoubtedly does, of highly competent men, the Council had not the opportunity of concurring largely enough in the practical organisation of the party.

It appears to us that that organisation is, and must remain, in all its essential features local. But there is still much work which a central body like the Council of the National Union can perform with great advantage to the party. It is the representative of many Associations on whom, in their respective constituencies, the work of the party greatly depends. It can superintend and stimulate their exertions; furnish them with advice, and in some measure with funds; provide them with lecturers; aid them in the improvement and development of the local press; and help them in perfecting the machinery by which the registration is conducted and the arrangements for providing volunteer agency at election times. It will have special opportunity of pressing upon the local Associations which it represents the paramount duty of selecting, in time, the candidates who are to come forward at the dissolution.

The field of work seems to us large — as large as the nature of the case permits — and ample enough to give scope for such co-operation as the able men who constitute the Council of the National Union may be in a position to offer. But if, on consideration, the Council should desire to submit to us any proposal with respect to the above matters or to other subjects, it will, of course, receive our attentive consideration.

Believe me
Yours very truly,
SALISBURY.

The arrival of this letter was hailed by Lord Randolph and his friends with delight, and with elaborate

gravity they made haste to accept it as a 'charter' establishing for ever the rights and position of the National Union. It might seem at first sight that Lord Salisbury's utterances were sufficiently vague and guarded; but this was not the view of the Organisation Committee and they forthwith proceeded to draw up a report, in which, it must be confessed, the assigned duties of the National Union seemed to be of a very responsible and definite character. The next step was, of course, to ask for funds to carry out such important work, and the report proceeded to indicate the sources to which the Organisation Committee would look: — 1884 ÆT. 35

The Council will, no doubt, perceive that for the proper discharge of these duties now imposed upon them by the leaders of the party the provision of considerable funds becomes a matter of first-class necessity. Your Committee have reason to believe that there exists at the present moment a large fund, collected for the general purposes of the Conservative party, and collected principally owing to the exertions of the Marquess of Abergavenny, from which the Council has from time to time received irregular and uncertain contributions, more or less of an eleemosynary character. Your Committee would strongly recommend to the Council that this arrangement, which in view of the new duties now devolving upon the Council must be considered as of a most unsatisfactory nature, should be modified, and that your Committee should be authorised by the Council to claim from the aforesaid fund a certain definite allocation, which shall be set apart absolutely for the uses of the National Union, and shall, in some measure, enable them to commence the effective discharge of their labours. In view, however, of the large field of work marked

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out by Lord Salisbury's letter, your Committee are of opinion that whatever funds they may be able to obtain from the aforesaid source should be supplemented by a vigorous and earnest appeal to the Conservative party generally throughout the country for donations and annual subscriptions.

Lastly, the Committee drew up a number of practical suggestions — some of which were subsequently followed, with excellent results — for the purpose of carrying out 'Lord Salisbury's scheme.'

Full information of the framing of this report and of its character was conveyed to Lord Salisbury through a channel which could not then be traced and he was much taken aback at the construction which had been put upon his letter. He therefore wrote immediately to Lord Randolph Churchill.

Private and Confidential. March 6, 1884.

My dear Lord Randolph, — I have been told on good authority that you had inferred, as the result of our recent communications, that in our contemplation the National Union was in some manner to take the place of the Central Committee and to do the work which the latter exclusively does now.

As my letter does not mention the Central Committee, this misapprehension (if, indeed, it has arisen) must be due to something that passed in our conversation at the Carlton on Sunday. I should blame myself severely if I had misled you as to our views on this point. The Central Committee are appointed by us and represent us: and we could not in any degree separate our position from theirs.

I hope, however, that there is no chance of the paths of the Central Committee and the National Union crossing: for there is plenty of good work for both to do.

I am sure you will forgive my giving you the trouble of

reading this letter — which only issues from my desire that we should all work together in good understanding. 1884 — Æt. 35

Believe me

Yours very truly,

SALISBURY.

'With reference to the hope,' replied Lord Randolph Churchill, 'which you express, that "there is no chance of the paths of the Central Committee and the National Union crossing," I fear it may be disappointed. In a struggle between a popular body and a close corporation, the latter, I am happy to say, in these days goes to the wall; for the popular body have this great advantage — that, having nothing to conceal, they can, at any moment they think proper, appeal fully (and in some measure recklessly) to a favourable and sympathising public, and I am of opinion that in such a course as this the National Union will find that I may be of some little assistance to them.'

The report, together with the 'Charter' letter, was presented to the Council at their meeting on the 7th, and their consideration was adjourned till the 14th. At this adjourned meeting Lord Percy read a letter which he had received from Lord Salisbury strongly disapproving of the report and deprecating its adoption. He thereupon moved its rejection. The Council divided, and Lord Percy's motion was negatived by 19 votes to 14. The report was then adopted by 19 votes to 7.

The consequences of this decision were surprising. On March 18 Lord Randolph Churchill received a

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letter from Mr. Bartley, the principal agent at the Conservative Central Office, informing him that Lord Salisbury and Sir Stafford Northcote thought it desirable that the Central Committee and the National Union should work with separate establishments, and requesting the National Union to take the necessary steps for removing their belongings.

It is very easy to see what a great tactical mistake Lord Salisbury and his friends committed by authorising such a letter to be written. The premises in question were not the property of Lord Salisbury and Sir Stafford Northcote and they had no legal power to eject the National Union. The National Union had since 1872 contributed from their own funds 175*l.* annually towards the rent and the office expenses. Moreover — and all this was carefully and forcefully put before the Organisation Committee by its Chairman — Lord Salisbury had directed such a letter to be written without waiting for any official information as to what the action which was complained of really was, and without communicating, except informally through Lord Percy, with the Council. The members of the Council therefore, many of whom were able men of local influence and importance, felt themselves affronted by discourteous usage. The opinion was expressed that when the leaders of the party had communications to make to the National Union, those communications should be made through their Chairman; and the 'notice to quit,' as it was called, was regarded as a cause of deep and undeserved offence.

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Lord Randolph Churchill was careful, however, not to make too much at the moment of this substantial advantage; and he persuaded the Committee to modify the report in several important particulars, so as to remove what were believed to be Lord Salisbury's objections. The revised draft was then, after several parleyings, forwarded to the party leaders, and on April 1 Lord Salisbury replied in a letter[1] which strictly limited the functions of the National Union and provided for its complete control by the Central Committee: —

> To ensure complete unity of action, we think it desirable that the Whips of the party should sit, *ex officio*, on the Council, and should have a right to be present at the meetings of all Committees. Such an arrangement would be a security against any unintentional divergencies of policy, and would lend weight to the proceedings of the Union. Business relating to candidates should remain entirely with the Central Committee. On the assumption, which we are entitled now to make, that the action of the two bodies will be harmonious, a separation of establishments will not be necessary — unless business should largely increase. There is some advantage, undoubtedly, in their working under a common roof, for it is difficult to distinguish between their functions so accurately, but that the need of mutual assistance and communication will constantly be felt.

On the receipt of this letter Lord Randolph Churchill resolved to abandon all pretence at further friendly negotiation. He summoned immediately a special meeting of the Organisation Committee, on which, as has been noticed, his personal influence

[1] Appendix II.

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predominated. Only three members besides himself — namely Colonel Burnaby, Mr. Cotter and Mr. Gorst — were able to attend; but these nevertheless took the responsibility of sending to the leaders of the party what was, as will presently appear, little less than a declaration of open war.

All these proceedings came before the Council of the National Union at their meeting on April 4. Lord Randolph Churchill, as Chairman, read Mr. Bartley's 'notice to quit' letter of March 17, which, he stated, was the result of an 'unauthorised, unofficial, and inaccurate communication' on the part of some member of the Council to the leaders of the party of what had taken place at the last meeting. But although the letter was a great obstacle to amicable intercourse, he had endeavoured to negotiate with the leaders, and had had many conferences with persons of influence, such as Lord Abergavenny and Sir Michael Hicks-Beach; and, finally, Mr. Gorst and he himself had had the honour of an interview with Lord Salisbury on March 21. The results of the interview had been very satisfactory, and it was understood that the leaders would communicate thereafter with the Council; but in spite of repeated requests, and even visits, no reply of any sort had been received. The Organisation Committee had therefore drawn up their report, making such alterations in it as they believed might make it acceptable. On the day following the circulation of this report to the Council the Chairman had received the letter from

Lord Salisbury of April 1, to which the Organisation Committee had sent a reply.[1] 1884 — Æt. 35

This reply, after recalling the proceedings at Birmingham and the unsatisfactory features in the Conservative organisation — 'the control of Parliamentary elections by the leader, the Whip, and the paid agent drawing their resources from secret funds' — suitable perhaps 'to the manipulation of the 10*l.* householder,' but utterly obsolete in the face of an extended franchise — described the gratification and encouragement with which the Council of the National Union had learned that Lord Salisbury was willing to entrust them with large and important duties. The Council, however, committed the serious error of 'imagining that your Lordship and Sir Stafford Northcote were in earnest in wishing them to become a real source of usefulness to the party.' They had been 'rudely undeceived.' The day after the adoption of their report they had been ordered to quit the premises they occupied. Their report had been disapproved on the ground that their activities would trench upon the functions 'of an amorphous and unknown body styled the Central Committee.' The precise language of Lord Salisbury's 'Charter' letter had been completely abandoned and refuge had been taken 'in vague, foggy, and utterly intangible suggestions.' In order that the Council of the National Union might be 'completely and for ever reduced to its ancient condition of dependence upon and servility to certain irresponsible

[1] Appendix II.

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persons who find favour in your eyes,' it was demanded that the Whips of the party should sit *ex officio* on the Council, with a right of being present at all committees. Finally, in the event of the Council — representing upwards of 500 affiliated Conservative Associations and composed of men eminent in position and political experience, enjoying the confidence of the party in populous localities and sacrificing continually much time, convenience and money to the work of the National Union — acquiescing in such a view of its functions, it might be graciously permitted to remain the humble inmate of the premises which it occupied.

We shall lay your letter and copy of this reply before the Council at its meeting to-morrow and shall move the Council that they adhere substantially to the report already adopted, in obedience to the direction of the Conference at Birmingham; that they take steps to provide themselves with their own offices and clerks; and that they continue to prosecute with vigour and independence the task which they have commenced — namely, the *bona-fide* popular organisation of the Conservative party.

It may be that the powerful and secret influences which have hitherto been unsuccessfully at work on the Council, with the knowledge and consent of your Lordship and Sir Stafford Northcote, may at last be effectual in reducing the National Union to its former make-believe and impotent condition; in that case we shall know what steps to take to clear ourselves of all responsibility for the failure of an attempt to avert the misfortunes and reverses which will, we are certain, under the present effete system of wire-pulling and secret organisation, overtake and attend the Conservative party at a General Election.

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Lord Randolph finished reading the letter, and after moving the appointment of an Executive Committee to carry out the recommendations of the report, sat down abruptly. He was immediately asked to state the names of those who had authorised the sending of such a letter, and the fact that they were only four in number was received with murmurs of astonishment. Lord Percy and Mr. Chaplin declined to serve upon the Executive Committee until the letter was withdrawn, and Lord Claud Hamilton moved at once the following amendment: 'That this Council regrets the disrespectful and improper tone of the letter of the Organisation Committee of the 3rd inst. to the Marquess of Salisbury, and declines to accept any responsibility for the same.' This was seconded by Mr. Stuart-Wortley, M.P., and supported by Mr. Chaplin and others in an acrimonious debate. The issue appeared doubtful, but Lord Randolph Churchill waved aside all suggestions of postponement and insisted upon an immediate decision. So great was his influence that the amendment was rejected by 19 to 13, and the original resolution (appointing an Executive Committee) was carried by 18 to 14. The Council then adjourned till May 2.

The month which followed was a month of intrigue and counter-intrigue. The majority which Lord Randolph commanded upon the Council, was small. He had been elected Chairman by a majority of two. The report of the Organisation

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Committee had escaped destructive amendment by five votes. The vote of censure on the Chairman had been rejected by no more than six and the Executive Committee appointed by no more than four. If two or three, or even one man, could be detached, the movement might be crushed and its leader overthrown; and to this end every effort of power and authority, by appeals, by local pressure, by threats and promises, was employed. Against this Lord Randolph could set nothing but his personal influence on the Council and his popularity in the country. It was evident, moreover, that a great trial of strength between the two sections of the Conservative party was impending, and moderate men had to choose once and for all on which side they would be found. It is, to say the least of it, remarkable that the majority on the Council remained till the end of April solid and unwavering.

In the face of this attitude Lord Salisbury and his associates prepared for compromise, and the leaders of Tory Democracy, who knew well how slender were their resources, showed every disposition to meet them. Lord Randolph Churchill declared that he would agree to anything 'which offered an honourable *modus vivendi* to the National Union consistent with the resolution of the Birmingham Conference.' Lord Salisbury appeared willing to concede a large part of what was demanded, including a grant of 3,000*l.* a year to the National Union funds. This compromise was to have been formally agreed to at the meeting of the Central Committee on

April 29, but at the last minute an unexpected event occurred. 1884 Æt. 35

Mr. Maclean, the Member for Oldham, had hitherto been one of Lord Randolph's consistent supporters on the Council, but his private object had been [1] to overthrow the dual control of Lord Salisbury and Sir Stafford Northcote, rather than to place the organisation of the party upon a democratic basis. If he had to choose, as he conceived himself compelled to choose, between Lord Salisbury and Lord Randolph Churchill, his intention was to support the former. He was a man of independent views, who was not likely to be influenced against his decision by either faction, and his intervention at this stage was for that reason all the more effective. He, knowing nothing of the impending compromise, now placed upon the agenda paper of the Council the following motion: —

'That, having regard to the paramount importance of complete harmony and united action between the Central Committee of the Conservative party and the Council of the National Union, a Committee of the Council be now appointed to confer with the Central Committee for the purpose of securing these objects.' On learning this Lord Salisbury at once broke off all negotiations, pending the result of the motion. Mr. Edward Stanhope was put in communication with Mr. Maclean and nothing was neglected to induce him to persist.

The Council met again on May 2. Lord Randolph informed Mr. Maclean privately that he would regard

[1] See J. M. Maclean's *Reminiscences*, p. 68.

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his motion, if carried, as a vote of want of confidence in the Chairman. But Maclean was not to be dissuaded, and upon a division — several of Lord Randolph's friends being absent — his motion prevailed by seventeen votes to thirteen. Lord Randolph Churchill thereupon immediately resigned the chairmanship of the Council. He determined to withdraw entirely from active politics, and it was said that he would seek rest and amusement abroad. He even prepared a letter to Mr. Satchell Hopkins explaining at length his reasons for abandoning his candidature at Birmingham.[1]

Awful joy was manifested at the Tory headquarters upon the sudden and complete suppression of the mutiny. At the Carlton and in the Lobby the 'old gang' were full of nervous self-congratulation. They had borne with him long enough. They had always warned him what the end would be. Now it had fallen out as they had always foreseen. Was it not sad to see a young man — of undoubted talent — destroy what might have been a meritorious career? &c., &c. The *Standard* chanted a solemn pæan of triumph. The victorious section upon the Council made haste to publish glowing accounts of their action, and incidentally communicated to the press the full terms of the 'irritating letter' which had been sent to Lord Salisbury on April 3, and which was, of course, a strictly confidential document. Sir Stafford Northcote said in his haste that Lord Randolph was 'a bonnet for the Liberal party.' This mood lasted for a little while. Then came a chilling reaction.

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The news of Lord Randolph Churchill's resignation became generally known on May 4, and it was received through all Conservative circles — except the highest — with something very like consternation. The publication of his letter to Lord Salisbury made a great sensation, not at all to his disadvantage. Telegrams, letters, resolutions, deputations poured in upon him in a stream. Within forty-eight hours a formidable movement in his favour had begun. The *Times* supported him in a powerful article (May 8). 'The main question at issue between him and the official leaders of the Opposition is whether the internal organisation of the party should be for the future established on a popular and representative or on a secret and irresponsible basis.' It declared that the quarrel, until it was repaired, left the country without an alternative Government. It urged Lord Salisbury not to delay in making friendly overtures. He had 'before this effected a not less difficult reconciliation.' If he delayed, it was quite possible that he might find himself 'in the position not so much of dictating terms of reconciliation as of accepting them.' Many other important Conservative newspapers took a similar view. In the Tory clubs of the large towns it was freely said that the one man who really knew how to fight Mr. Gladstone, had been tripped up by the jealous intrigues of an effete, incompetent clique of aristocrats. A loud outcry was raised against 'the back-parlour' management of a great party.

A more remarkable and effective demonstration

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followed. On May 8, the respective Chairmen of the Liverpool, Manchester, Brighton, Sheffield, Hull, Edinburgh, and Bristol Conservative Associations, representing 300,000 electors, met together in London under the presidency of Mr. A. B. Forwood. They invited Lord Randolph Churchill to confer with them, and having heard his views drew up a memorandum to the Council of the National Union, of which the principal recommendation was that he should be 'earnestly requested to withdraw his resignation.' They added, moreover, that the National Union was not as representative of the feeling in the country as it ought to be and urged that immediate steps should be taken to broaden the basis of its organisation. They addressed themselves also to Lord Salisbury both by letter and deputation.

Among the many tokens of public goodwill of which Lord Randolph was at this time the object, there was one which seemed peculiarly welcome. It was a deputation of undergraduates from the Cambridge University Carlton, who travelled to London for the purpose of offering what encouragement lay in their power. A year later, when as a Minister of the Crown Lord Randolph was able to accept the invitation of this club to a House dinner, he alluded to the incident in terms which cast an intimate light upon his feelings at this tempestuous moment: —

'There was a time last year when it happened to me to be engaged in something partaking of the nature of a struggle with men of great position, great responsibility, and great experience, as to the

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form which modern Conservative political organisation ought to take. That difference of opinion at one time became very sharp, and I did not know what the result of it might be; and I was getting extremely anxious, more for the sake of the Conservative party than for my own sake. One evening I came home from the House of Commons very anxious and rather discouraged, because at the House of Commons, among people whom I ought to look upon as my political friends, I had met nothing but gloomy looks; and I felt very much inclined to retire from the game, thinking I was doing more harm than good, and rather — to use a slang expression — disposed to cut the whole concern. However, when I arrived at my house I found there waiting for me a deputation from the University Carlton. Three gentlemen — three, I will venture to say, of the most accomplished and able envoys ever sent out on any mission — were waiting for me; and the only error which they committed was that, instead of going into my house and waiting for me there, with whatever accommodation that dwelling might afford, they waited for me in the street, and had been waiting for me some time. I do not think you can imagine the effect that expression of sympathy and that cordial invitation had upon me at the time. Before I received it I felt that I was very young, very inexperienced, and very much alone, and I did not know to what extent any portion or fraction of public opinion might be with me. But the expression of opinion from your club filled me with hopes

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that, after all, I was not going so very far wrong — that I might still persevere a little longer. I did persevere; everything came all right, everything settled down, both to the harmony and, I think, to the advantage of the Tory party. That was, to my mind, and must always be, as far as I am concerned, a most interesting and memorable incident. It was an encouragement from youth to youth.'

This temper among the rank and file was not lost upon the leaders of the party. The olive branch was held out publicly, though patronisingly, by Mr. Stanhope at a Finsbury meeting as early as May 7. Lord Salisbury replied with grave courtesy to the representations of the provincial Chairmen. All sorts of busybodies ran to and fro like shuttles weaving up a peace. On the 9th a party meeting was called at the Carlton Club to plan the contemplated second vote of censure on Egyptian policy. Upwards of 170 members of Parliament attended. To the astonishment of many, who thought he had been drummed out of the Conservative ranks, Lord Randolph strolled in unconcernedly, was warmly welcomed by the leaders, and, rising immediately after Sir Stafford Northcote, expressed his entire approval of the terms of the vote of censure and of the general arrangement of the debate. The meeting was loud in its satisfaction at these signs of concord. The negotiations with the Central Committee were resumed, almost at the point where they had been broken off. When the Council of the National Union met again on the 16th, it was evident that the

tide of opinion flowed strongly in Lord Randolph's favour. Upon the motion of Lord Holmesdale he was unanimously re-elected Chairman. He thus returned stronger than ever, neither disarmed nor placated, and the movement which he had launched was driven steadily and relentlessly forward.

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CHAPTER VIII

THE REFORM BILL

Nullius addictus jurare in verba magistri,
Quo me cunque rapit tempestas deferor hospes.

HORACE.

Sworn to no master, of no sect am I,
As drives the storm, at any door I knock.

POPE'S *Imitations*.

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THE Parliamentary session of 1884 began ill for Her Majesty's Ministers and its first month was like enough to have been their last. While the mover and seconder of the Address to the Crown in either House were purring ceremonious optimism about the improvement of the Egyptian situation, the news arrived that General Valentine Baker's wretched army had been utterly destroyed by Osman Digna in a vain attempt to relieve Tokar. So little disposed, indeed, were the Government to discuss Egyptian affairs that they allowed the debate in the Commons to collapse in a single night without any official reply to the serious attacks which had been made; and it was only revived next day through Lord Randolph's moving the adjournment of the House, in somewhat unusual procedure, to protest against their silence.

Hard upon the heels of Soudan disaster, and equally unwelcome, came Mr. Bradlaugh. Judgment

had been delivered in the Court of Queen's Bench upon the suit Bradlaugh *v.* Gosset, brought by the member for Northampton against the Serjeant-at-Arms for excluding him from the precincts of the House. The Court, while admitting the absolute command of the Houses of Parliament over their own discipline, rules of procedure, and interpretation thereof, asserted that resolutions of either House could not affect Acts imposing fines and penalties. The opportunity was thus presented to Mr. Bradlaugh of testing in the Courts the value of a self-administered oath followed by a vote in Parliament. Once again, therefore (February 11), he presented himself at the table. Once again the members broke into a storm of shouting which drowned his voice. Once again the Leader of the House sat silent and powerless. But the battlefield had now become familiar to the Opposition. Sir Stafford Northcote moved that the member for Northampton be not permitted to go through the form of repeating the words of the oath. Mr. Labouchere provoked the House to a division, in which Mr. Bradlaugh voted. Motion was made forthwith to expunge his vote. Mr. Bradlaugh voted again upon this. When it was realised that his vote could always be recorded once oftener than it could be disallowed, the numbers of the first division were read out and Sir Stafford Northcote's motion was carried by 280 to 187. A further motion to exclude Mr. Bradlaugh from the precincts of the House was agreed to without voting. Mr. Bradlaugh thereafter applied for the Chiltern Hundreds and, his seat

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being thus vacated, Mr. Labouchere moved for a new writ. This was granted by the House in spite of Lord Randolph's opposition. The electors of Northampton returned Mr. Bradlaugh without delay by a largely increased majority. Sir Stafford Northcote again moved his old motion to exclude him from the House and, although the Prime Minister spoke impressively against it, the motion was carried (February 26) by 226 to 173.

The Government were scarcely free from the humiliations of this affair when fresh tidings of massacre and disaster arrived from the Soudan. Despairing of relief after the destruction of Baker's army, the garrison of Tokar surrendered. The garrison of Sinkat perished in an attempt to cut their way to the coast. While the fate of these places was inevitably approaching, votes of censure were moved in both Houses of Parliament. In the Lords the motion of Lord Cairns and Lord Salisbury was affirmed by 181 to 81. In the Commons the debate followed what was becoming the usual course. Sir Stafford Northcote made a long, mild, and moderate speech, to which Mr. Gladstone replied vigorously. The moment he sat down Lord Randolph Churchill sprang up to attack him in rhetoric which can only be sustained by passion in few men and on rare occasions. '"Too late!"' he cried. '"Too late!" is an awful cry. From time immemorial it has heralded and proclaimed the slaughter of routed armies, the flight of dethroned monarchs, the crash of falling Empires. Wherever human blood has been

poured out in torrents, wherever human misery has been accumulated in mountains, wherever disasters have occurred which have shaken the world to its very centre, there straight and swift, up to heaven, or down to hell, has always gone the appalling cry, "Too late! Too late!" The Opposition cannot but move a vote of censure upon a Government whose motto is "Too late!" The Liberals should be chary of giving support to a Government whose motto is "Too late!"; and the people of this country will undoubtedly repudiate a Government whose motto is invariably "Too late!"'

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The Conservative party, profoundly stirred by tales of blood and shame, continued shouting at this fierce conclusion long after the orator had ceased.

From these embarrassments and humiliations the Government found a happy escape which for a while entirely transformed the Parliamentary situation and placed them, in the fifth year of their troubled existence, once again in a position of great advantage. The story of the Reform Bill of 1884 may be briefly told. By enlargements of the household franchise and by assimilation of the county and borough franchise, two million new electors would be called into being and the total electorate raised from three to five millions. The momentum which this ponderous measure acquired was great enough to carry it forward through all sections of the Liberal party and over all opposition in the House of Commons, and to throw on one side or the other, as irrelevant or impracticable, principles as democratic as 'one man one vote,' causes as cherished

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as 'Female Suffrage,' devices as intricate and attractive as proportional representation. The Bill itself became an object of paramount desire. 'It is,' said Mr. Gladstone in introducing it, 'a Bill worth having; again I say it is a Bill worth your not endangering. Let us enter into no by-way which would lead us off the path marked straight out before us. Let there be no wanderings on the hill-tops of speculation or into the morasses and fogs of doubt. What we want to carry this Bill is union, and union only. What will endanger it is disunion, and disunion only.' And so it proved.

The position of the Conservative party had been very ill-defined on the question of Parliamentary Reform ever since 1867. Mr. Disraeli's action had deprived them for ever of the right to oppose large extensions of the franchise on principle. Tory Democracy, especially in Lancashire, though hostile to the Government, looked with favour on their proposal. Reform was a national as well as a party movement. Yet, on the other hand, some of the strongest and most unyielding forces in the Tory ranks — the county members in the House of Commons and Lord Salisbury in the House of Lords — were prepared to offer a stubborn resistance to the change.

Nor, indeed, were they without grave reason from their point of view. Hitherto the county Conservatives had been mainly, if not entirely, selected and returned by farmers and landowners. The great labouring population had been altogether excluded from political power. Now that the franchise was

offered to them, they welcomed it with greater earnestness and enthusiasm than they have ever displayed on any other question. Social reforms were good enough in their way but it was the *vote* on which they had set their hearts. There was a temper among them that no one who understood county politics, could mistake and that filled the Conservative representatives of a hundred seats with a profound dismay. The overwhelming electorate that was to be, regarded the interest of the farmer and landlord as fundamentally antagonistic to their own. Any representative or candidate who was agreeable to the farmer, must therefore be an enemy of theirs. Gratitude for the boon which was offered, threw them still more completely on the Liberal side; and the country party, once all powerful, long predominant, always exercising enormous influence, now looked political extermination in the face.

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Lord Randolph Churchill's course through this memorable controversy is not marked by that clearness of view or consistency of action which may be claimed for him during his whole life upon so many important questions. In a letter written some years afterwards he speaks of it as 'the only sharp curve' revealed by his published speeches. But, in truth, the forces which he employed, as well as those with which he was contending, were complex and uncertain to a degree beyond description. Tory Democracy wanted to pass the Bill, yet wanted to destroy the Government. The Conservative party, as a whole, hated the Bill, hated the Government, yet

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were unable to agree upon uncompromising opposition. These perplexities were multiplied by the struggle for mastery which was proceeding between the rival Parliamentary groups upon the Council of the National Union and by the varying relations of Lord Randolph Churchill towards Lord Salisbury and the official party leaders. The Fourth Party was fated to perish amid this intricate confusion. Its members criticised and even attacked one another and, though they still all sat together in their old places, their old comradeship was utterly destroyed.

It was known during the autumn of 1883 that the question of Reform was occupying the Cabinet and would probably issue in a Bill. On December 19, 1883, when Lord Randolph was delivering his 'trilogy' at Edinburgh, he had dealt among other matters with the question of Reform. Attacking the Government, he was easily led into attacking their project. As the representative of a small agricultural borough he could not, as he himself said afterwards, be expected to look upon a measure for the extinction of Woodstock 'with any very longing eye.' The divided state of opinion in the Conservative party had not then been disclosed. He believed that they would insist upon fighting the Bill to the death and he was willing to stand with them in such a struggle. He therefore spoke against Reform — not, indeed, in principle — but on the ground of (1) the inopportuneness of the moment chosen and the far more urgent character of other questions; (2) the obvious risk of any large addition to the Irish

electorate; (3) the transparent design of the Government to divert public attention from foreign affairs; (4) the absence of any indication, on the part of the unenfranchised masses, of any great desire for the voting privilege.[1] His words, though listened to with attention and respect, were plainly not acceptable to the audience of Scotch artisans. They wanted to cheer the Tory Democrat: but they also wanted Reform. A more surprising incident followed. Mr. Balfour and Lord Elcho, who were on the platform, both thought it necessary then and there to declare themselves in favour of the assimilation of the county and borough franchise. Before Parliament assembled the utter lack of unanimity in the Conservative party against the Bill was evident and all chance of resisting it consequently perished. 1883 Æt. 34

The attempt to overthrow the Government on their Egyptian policy having failed, the Reform Bill was introduced. Lord Randolph proposed to meet it on the second reading by moving the previous question — 'that the question be not now put.' This form of opposition asserted most of the objections he had stated at Edinburgh, without committing anyone who might support it to resistance to Reform on principle. He secured precedence for his motion. But the Conservative leaders, who were also unable to meet the Bill squarely, attempted a parry of their own. They declared that they could not agree to the extension of the franchise unless it were coupled with provision

[1] Letter to Mr. Wainwright, M.P., June 9, 1884, Appendix III.

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for a redistribution of seats. A motion in this sense was placed upon the paper by Lord John Manners in the name of the Opposition. In so far as this motion allowed it to be assumed that the leaders of the Conservative party were favourable to the extension of the franchise, if only it were accompanied by redistribution, it was plainly a pretence. But there was one element of grim reality about it. A dissolution upon the extended electorate before redistribution had taken effect would have been peculiarly injurious to Conservative interests both in town and country. At Sir Stafford Northcote's request Lord Randolph Churchill removed his motion of 'the previous question' from the paper and issue was accordingly joined upon the motion of Lord John Manners. Even this modified and rather meaningless form of resistance did not secure the support of the entire Conservative party. At the beginning of the session the Government majority had fallen to 17. They carried the second reading of the 'Bill for the Representation of the People,' as it was officially styled, by a majority of 130 (340–210).

Confronted with such evidences of the impossibility of further resisting the measure as a whole, Lord Randolph Churchill now abandoned altogether his opposition. He thought that if the Conservative party were not prepared to fight the Bill, there was no reason why they should incur the odium and the hazards, without the satisfactions of war, or the hope of victory. Moreover, he had in the meanwhile accepted the invitation to contest Birmingham at the General

Election, and in exchanging a large democratic constituency for a family borough he was naturally freed from those special reasons connected with Woodstock which had previously influenced him. 1884 Æt. 35

These arguments were no doubt fortified by the progress of the debates in the House of Commons. It soon became certain that the Bill would pass and that the Conservative party could offer it no united and general resistance. It became, moreover, evident that the most bitter opponents of Lord Randolph Churchill personally and of Tory Democracy as an idea, were also the most bitter opponents of Reform. The line of cleavage between the New and the Old Tories ran through the whole question. The very fact that the 'old gang' were obstinately against the measure influenced Lord Randolph powerfully in its favour and he was not the man to allow a single precipitate speech to separate him from those progressive forces in the Conservative party whose representative he was. 'An unchanging mind,' he observed on one occasion, 'is an admirable possession — a possession which I devoutly hope I shall never possess.' He declared publicly that he now regarded Reform as inevitable, and that the principles of the assimilation of the county and borough franchise and of equality of political rights between England and Ireland must henceforth govern Conservatives as well as Liberals. The Fourth Party therefore, after the second reading, became the friends of the Reform Bill and genuinely and materially assisted its passage.

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While the Bill was passing through Committee the quarrel in the National Union was at its height, and Lord Randolph and his handful of friends became increasingly hostile to the Conservative leaders and consequently more favourable to Reform. He and Mr. Gorst voted and Sir Henry Wolff spoke against Sir R. Cross's amendment which affected the principle of the Bill. The question of the date at which the Reform Bill should come into force, exercised the Conservative party and was vital to the position of conditional resistance they had perforce adopted. Sir Henry Wolff, in the name of the Fourth Party, made a motion which would have had the effect of postponing the decision upon this point until a later stage. His suggestion was willingly accepted by Mr. Gladstone in the interests of a compromise. Colonel Stanley, however, proposed from the Front Opposition Bench at once to insert words delaying the operation of the Franchise Bill until Redistribution had been effected. Lord Randolph Churchill on this said bluntly that he had changed his mind since the beginning of the session and he argued that while it might have been possible to fight the Bill with a united party, it was foolish to incur popular displeasure by futile attempts to wreck it. Colonel Stanley's amendment was dismissed by a large majority (276–182).

The tactics of the Fourth Party were supported by a few independent members, but the serious cleavage in the Tory ranks was revealed more evidently by the number of Conservatives who failed, during

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various divisions in Committee, to sustain the Opposition leaders in the Lobby. Lord Randolph's refusal to fight provoked indignant complaints from those old-fashioned country Tories who, faced by political ruin in their seats, naturally wished to offer the Bill an unyielding resistance, no matter at what cost to party interests in general; and, as may be imagined, they did not neglect to quote Lord Randolph's Edinburgh speech against him. To charges of inconsistency which were not indeed denied, Lord Randolph and his supporters retorted by accusing the Conservative leaders of being secretly anxious to kill a measure they did not dare openly to assail. During these debates the separation of Mr. Balfour from the rest of the Fourth Party became notorious. Lord Randolph, reproached with having abandoned his attitude of strong opposition to Reform, adroitly attributed his conversion to Mr. Balfour and Lord Elcho, who had proclaimed at Edinburgh their dissent from his earlier opinion. Mr. Balfour replied with some acidness that 'his noble friend's efforts to be in perfect accord with the Conservative party, numerous and well-intentioned as they were, did not seem to be crowned with success.' Through the ineptitude of some of their leaders and the perversity of others the Opposition, alike above and below the gangway, cut a poor figure during the debates on the 'Bill for the Representation of the People.'

Perhaps the most direct divergence occurred on Mr. Brodrick's amendment to omit Ireland from the

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scope of the new franchise. We have seen how Lord Randolph, as a young man in the Parliament of 1874, had first supported and later on — when circumstances had changed — opposed the extension to Ireland of electoral privileges similar to and simultaneous with those enjoyed in Great Britain. His speech at Edinburgh had laid emphasis on the danger of any large accession to the Irish vote. Only a few days before the question was discussed he had been re-elected, as described in the last chapter, to the chairmanship of the Council of the National Union. It was popularly assumed that he had come to terms with Lord Salisbury, and their reported reconciliation had been ostentatiously paraded in the party press. But when Lord Randolph resumed the debate on May 20, it soon appeared that he was still recalcitrant. Amid an ominous silence on the Conservative benches he asked Mr. Brodrick to withdraw his amendment, and declared that he had made up his mind to vote against it if it were carried to a division. He then declared once and for all in favour of the equal and similar treatment of Ireland in all matters of electoral reform; and this principle of 'similarity and simultaneity,' as it came to be called, has since been commonly identified with his name. One passage in this speech was at the time greatly admired and applauded. Mr. Smith during the autumn had argued that no votes should be given to Irish peasants who lived in mud-cabins, and the 'mud-cabin' argument had become a very prominent

feature in the debate. Lord Randolph dealt with this contention in his most polished Parliamentary style. 1884 Æt. 35

'I have heard,' he said, 'a great deal of the mud-cabin argument. For that we are indebted to the brilliant, ingenious, and fertile mind of the right honourable member for Westminster.[1] I suppose that in the minds of the lords of suburban villas, of the owners of vineries and pineries, the mud-cabin represents the climax of physical and social degradation. But the franchise in England has never been determined by Parliament with respect to the character of the dwellings. The difference between the cabin of the Irish peasant and the cottage of the English agricultural labourer is not so great as that which exists between the abode of the right honourable member for Westminster and the humble roof which shelters from the storm the individual who now has the honour to address the Committee.' When the cheers and laughter had subsided he went on to quote the famous lines: —

> Non ebur, neque aureum
> Meâ renidet in domo lacunar;
> Non trabes Hymettiae
> Premunt columnas ultimâ recisas
> Africâ.

'But if the right honourable member for Westminster were to propose to the Committee that he himself should have a vote at Parliamentary elections and that I should have none, I feel sure the

[1] Mr. W. H. Smith.

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House of Commons would repudiate the proposal with indignation and disgust.' The 'mud-cabin' argument seems after this to have disappeared altogether from Parliamentary warfare and Mr. Brodrick's amendment was rejected by the enormous majority of 332 to 137. After this the resistance of the Opposition in the House of Commons was at an end. The third reading of the Bill was allowed to pass *nemine contradicente* and entered accordingly on the journals of the House. The Bill then went to the House of Lords at the end of June; and there, by amendments supported by majorities of 59 and 50, it was incontinently destroyed. The collision between the two Houses was direct, and a dangerous excitement arose in the country.

Although unwilling to impede the progress of the Reform Bill and decidedly predisposed to take action contrary to the views of his own pastors above the gangway in order to put a spoke in their wheel, Lord Randolph was the most unrelenting and vigilant opponent of the Liberal Government. Whenever and wherever a favourable chance of fighting occurred he was the foremost man, and many furious wrangles between him and Mr. Gladstone, or Mr. Chamberlain or Sir Charles Dilke marked the course of the session. In the quarrel between the two Houses after the rejection of the Bill in the House of Lords, he exerted himself to his utmost on behalf of the House of Lords and laid on the Prime Minister the whole responsibility for the dangerous constitutional situation which had arisen and was

becoming increasingly grave. Hansard and the newspapers record these battles in ample detail. Sometimes he found powerful support. On one occasion, when a dispute arose with Sir Charles Dilke as to the accuracy of a quotation from Lord Randolph's speeches, Sir Michael Hicks-Beach said abruptly that 'he preferred to believe the word of his noble friend to that of the right honourable baronet' — an observation which he was required by the Speaker to withdraw. On another occasion Lord Randolph charged the Prime Minister with having 'traduced' his opponents by representing that Lord Salisbury had said in the course of a confidential conversation that he would not discuss Redistribution 'with a rope round his neck,' and he moved the adjournment of the House. Mr. Gladstone, violently incensed, described this word 'traduce' — which he declared implied a wilful and disgraceful act, not arising from error — as 'foul language.' Lord Randolph immediately rose to order, and asked the Speaker whether the Prime Minister was to be allowed to use words which would not be tolerated in any other member. The Speaker hoped that Mr. Gladstone would not insist on employing the expression. The Prime Minister's reply was accepted as a withdrawal, though his actual words do not favour that construction. It is said that this was the only time in his whole career when Mr. Gladstone incurred the rebuke of the Chair. Lord Randolph seems to have been distressed at having offended his great antagonist so deeply. Later in

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the debate he rose again. 'Recollecting,' he said, 'the vast difference which separates me from the Prime Minister, I wish to say that it never has been and never will be my intention, during the many years I hope he will remain in this House, to use language in any way incompatible with his lofty position.' Mr. Gladstone received this assurance with much magnificent urbanity. 'I was no doubt at the moment a little irritated at language that I thought very strong; but on reflection I must own that the noble lord has always been very courteous to me.'

But whether, in these vexed and protracted debates, Lord Randolph Churchill attacked the Prime Minister or harassed his own leaders; whether he was supported by loud applauses of Conservative members or heard by them in chilly silence; whether he seemed to be the accepted spokesman of the Opposition or a solitary politician — his hand against every man and every man's hand against him — his almost unerring eye for a Parliamentary situation, his mastery over the House and his formidable power for good or evil upon the fortunes of his party became continually more evident. Alone, or almost alone, he waged his double warfare against Government and Opposition. Assailed on all sides — from the Ministerial box, from the Front Opposition Bench, from those who sat before him and behind him and even beside him; confronted with his own contradictory statements, now by one side, now by the other; rebuked by the Prime Minister, repeatedly

repudiated by his colleagues and leaders, he nevertheless preserved throughout an air of haughty composure and met or repelled all attacks with resourceful and undaunted pluck. 'Tory Democracy,' said Mr. Chamberlain during a vehement speech in favour of the Reform Bill (House of Commons, March 27), 'of which we shall hear a good deal in the future, is represented in this House by the member for Woodstock. I pay the greatest attention to anything he says because I find that what he says to-day his leaders say to-morrow. They follow him with halting steps, somewhat unwillingly; but they always follow him. They may not always like the prescription he makes up for them; but they always swallow it.' 1884 Æt. 35

Meanwhile the second vote of censure upon the conduct of Egyptian affairs had been debated. On May 12 Sir Michael Hicks-Beach moved: 'That this House regrets to find the course pursued by Her Majesty's Government has not tended to promote the success of General Gordon's mission and that even such steps as may be necessary to secure his personal safety are delayed.' The attack was vigorously delivered. The Prime Minister's reply was judged inadequate and disquieting, even by many of his own supporters. Mr. Forster assailed him during the debate harshly and sternly. The weight and earnestness of Lord Hartington alone retrieved Ministerial fortunes. Lord Randolph Churchill spoke (May 13) to a larger audience, according to the newspapers, than had gathered to hear any other speaker; and the benches, the gangways and the

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spaces below the bar and behind the Chair were all filled to overflowing. Despite the bitterness of the struggle in the National Union, the wrangles over the Reform Bill of almost nightly recurrence and the antagonisms which these had excited, the Conservative members broke into loud acclamation at his rising. Before he had spoken for a quarter of an hour he was sustained by the cheering of the whole party. He scourged Mr. Gladstone relentlessly. He applied to him the well-known story of the Duke of Wellington sitting down after making a speech on Reform amid a great buzz of conversation and, on asking the reason for the excitement, being told: 'My Lord Duke, you have announced the fall of your Government.' It was curious, he said, how different individuals appealed to the Prime Minister's sympathies. 'I compared his efforts in the cause of General Gordon with his efforts in the cause of Mr. Bradlaugh. If a hundredth part of those invaluable moral qualities bestowed upon the cause of a seditious blasphemer had been given to the support of a Christian hero, the success of Gordon's mission would have been assured. But the finest speech he ever delivered in the House of Commons was in support of the seditious blasphemer; and the very worst he ever delivered, by common consent, was in the cause of the Christian hero.' At this there was a great tumult.

Towards the end, when he had his party thoroughly behind him, Lord Randolph took occasion to declare, in the form of an elaborate eulogy upon Sir Michael Hicks-Beach, his intentions as to the

leadership of the House of Commons. 'I hear a great deal about the deplorable weakness of the Opposition; but I did not detect any deplorable weakness in the speech of the right honourable gentleman who proposed this motion; nor did I detect any deplorable weakness in the sonorous and resonant cheers which greeted that speech continually from beginning to end — a speech with reference to which I may be permitted to remark that it was a magnificent indictment, all the more magnificent because it was so measured and so grave; and I think it must have recalled to the Prime Minister himself the palmy days of Tory leadership.' 1884 Æt. 35

'The Government,' he concluded, 'when they went to Egypt abandoned every atom of principle which they possessed. Egypt has been a Nemesis to them and will, I believe, be their ruin. But the whole question is at last, thank God, presented to us in an intelligible form. Will you or will you not rescue Gordon? Answer "Aye" or "No." The people of England and Scotland, and of Ireland also, I believe, say "Aye."' (Cries of "No" from the Ministerial benches and cheers.) 'The Prime Minister and a few Radical fanatics say "No"; but great as is the Prime Minister's power, long as has been his career and dazzling as his eloquence is, the odds against him on this question are so overwhelming that even he must either submit or resign.' The Government escaped defeat only by twenty-eight votes. Thirty-one Home Rulers voted with the Tory party; and fifteen, or enough to have carried

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the censure, voted with Ministers. The debate and the division alike foreshadowed the events of 1885.

While the fortunes of battle in the House of Commons varied thus from day to day, the attention of both factions in the National Union was concentrated on the approaching Conference of delegates from all parts of the country, when the new Council must be elected. The chairmanship depended upon the complexion of the Council. Lord Percy, the official candidate, and his friends entertained hopes that an appeal to the delegates to stand by the official leaders of the party and to repudiate disloyalty would result in the election of a Council hostile to Lord Randolph Churchill. To this end nothing was neglected. A careful and earnest canvass was set on foot, supported by all the influence which the representatives of the old and high Toryism could command. Sheffield, it appears, was specially selected for the meeting-place, as the local members were hostile to Lord Randolph; and that authority in its highest embodiment should not be lacking, Lord Salisbury himself undertook to address the assembled delegates at the evening meeting.

On the other hand Lord Randolph Churchill's friends were not idle, and Mr. Gorst's great experience in all matters of organisation proved invaluable; but when all had been done, the event rested upon a popular vote, the character of which none could forecast. The Conference was awaited by all parties with anxiety and excitement, and passion ran high in the weeks that preceded it. Lord Randolph had

promised informally to speak for Mr. Stuart-Wortley at Sheffield. Consequent upon that gentleman's hostility he now refused. He was pressed to reconsider his decision in order to avoid making differences public. He refused. The report of the Council of the National Union was now prepared for the Conference. It contained a succinct account of the course of the quarrel, with many of the letters published in the last chapter. It was felt that its circulation would be damaging to party interests. Mr. Bartley, 'at risk even of annoying you,' wrote (July 9) to urge that it should be suppressed or modified. Lord Randolph curtly replied that the report unanimously adopted by the Council for presentation to the Conference could not now be altered without authority. A requisition under the rules of the National Union, duly signed by five members of the Council, was forwarded to Lord Randolph (July 10) demanding a special meeting for the purpose of revising the report. Availing himself of the discretionary power reserved to the Chairman under by-law No. 23, Lord Randolph declined to act upon the requisition.

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The following correspondence also passed at this time between him and Sir Stafford Northcote: —

Sir Stafford Northcote to Lord Randolph Churchill.

Private. 30 St. James's Place, S.W.: July 10, 1884.

Dear Lord Randolph, — Will you be able to give me a few minutes' conversation after Mr. Gladstone has made his statement to-night?

We ought, I think, as soon as the intentions of the Government have been disclosed, to come to some

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arrangement for a meeting in London (either St. James's Hall, Duke of Wellington's Riding School, or elsewhere, but *not* out of doors) in order to give the keynote for the party in the country. I would not make it a meeting about the Reform Bill exclusively, but have three or four resolutions — one a general review of the Ministerial misdeeds; another a growl about Egypt; another on the question of the Franchise Bill; and a concluding one urging a dissolution, unless Gladstone has already announced one.

I should like to consult you about the resolutions and about some other points.

I remain

Yours very faithfully,

STAFFORD H. NORTHCOTE.

Lord Randolph Churchill to Sir Stafford Northcote.

2 Connaught Place, W.: July 10, 1884.

Dear Sir Stafford Northcote, — It is my duty always to hold myself at your service whenever it may be your pleasure to do me the honour of asking my opinion on any political question; at the same time I feel bound to remark that former occasions on which on your invitation I have offered an opinion have almost invariably led to considerable misunderstandings, for which, of course, I blame no one but myself.

The Conference of Associations which is to meet on the 23rd will have to decide upon important and serious differences which have arisen between myself and certain other parties who claim to be acting (with what amount of justice I cannot determine) as the representatives and agents of yourself and the Marquis of Salisbury; and till that Conference has taken place I am certain that it is not in my power to attend public meetings with the slightest usefulness or effect.

Believe me to be

Yours very faithfully,

RANDOLPH S. CHURCHILL.

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The Conservative Associations assembled at Sheffield on July 23. Lord Randolph did not attend Lord Salisbury's meeting, though Mr. Chaplin naïvely assured him that he would have been welcome. Upwards of 450 delegates gathered under his presidency in the Cutlers' Hall. He made a conciliatory speech, urging the necessity of adapting the organisation of the Conservative party to the changed political requirements of the day. He expounded the report at length and concluded by declaring that in the contest between himself and Lord Percy he was actuated by no personal ambition, but anxious for the welfare of the party. Lord Percy thereupon attacked him, asserting 'that he had broken away from the leaders of the party and not adhered to them as he ought to have done.' It was known that he spoke with official authority and that the candidates whom he proposed were those favoured by Lord Salisbury and Sir Stafford Northcote. After a long debate the delegates voted. Lord Randolph Churchill was placed at the head of the poll by 346 votes. Mr. Forwood, his principal supporter, was second, but after a great interval (298). Six of his nominees occupied the first six places. Lord Percy did not appear till the eighth place (260). Lord Salisbury's private secretary, who was also a candidate, was rejected. Out of thirty candidates proposed by Lord Randolph Churchill, twenty-two were elected. The whole official authority of the party exerted by Lord Percy secured only eighteen out of thirty-six put forward by him. 'The result,' said the *Times*

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(July 24), 'showed that the substantial victory rested with Lord Randolph Churchill.' His main reforms in organisation had been conceded by the Central Committee and adopted by resolution at the Conference. His own re-election as Chairman was assured.

But now a strange and unexpected turn was given to the course of events. Lord Randolph Churchill's victory, remarkable as it was, had been narrowly won. A powerful and inflamed minority remained upon the Council of the National Union to hamper and assail the leader of Tory Democracy. The proverbial three courses lay before him. To renew his chairmanship and to continue an internecine quarrel up to the very verge of the General Election; to withdraw for a time from public life; or to make a peace with Lord Salisbury. He chose the third. Sir Henry Wolff was authorised to open negotiations. Mr. Balfour's good offices were freely tendered. Lord Salisbury was prompt in seizing the opportunity. Indeed, the suicidal results to the principals and to their party of a continuance of the quarrel were obvious. Terms of reconciliation were speedily arranged. The Central Committee was abolished, and the democratic reforms in the organisation of the National Union were confirmed; the Primrose League was formally recognised and supported by the official leaders. Sir Michael Hicks-Beach, who had been elected to the Council of the National Union as an independent member on the list of neither contending faction, and who was liked and trusted by both sides, was nominated as the new Chairman.

There was, moreover, a general understanding that Lord Randolph Churchill and his friends were to act in harmony with Lord Salisbury and were to be treated with full confidence by him and the ruling members of the Conservative party.

Such were the conditions, so far as they could be, or have ever been, put on paper. But it is evident that their moral consequences were of much graver importance. No record has been preserved of what passed at the interview between Lord Randolph Churchill and Lord Salisbury. But certain very significant facts are plain. Lord Salisbury did not select a lieutenant. He formed an alliance on terms of comradeship for the general advantage of the party. The two men met as chiefs of almost equal powers. Although Lord Salisbury's primacy was never disputed by Lord Randolph Churchill, they exercised from the very first a divided authority; and it is in the light of this unusual relationship — based not, indeed, upon any definite agreement, but arising out of the hard facts of the situation — that the conduct of both, amid the political turbulence of the next two years, can alone be fairly judged.

Lord Salisbury was loyal throughout to Sir Stafford Northcote, even in a degree which was often detrimental to party interests. But, whatever his wishes may have been, the settlement of the National Union dispute sealed that unfortunate statesman's fate — so far as the leadership of the House of Commons was concerned. The dinner to which, in celebration of the peace, Lord Salisbury invited the Council of the

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National Union, including a majority of those who had been his most active opponents during the past year, was the public acceptance of Tory Democracy in the councils of the Conservative party. The great meeting held in the Pomona Gardens at Manchester in August and addressed by Lord Salisbury, Lord Randolph Churchill, and Sir Michael Hicks-Beach, was a plain indication of the Cabinet and Parliamentary arrangements which would be a necessary consequence of that acceptance.

Sir Henry Wolff, who had been throughout these conflicts Lord Randolph's most intimate and trusted friend, entirely approved of the steps which had been taken to end the quarrel.[1] Mr. Gorst also wrote to Lord Randolph on July 27, 1884, expressly and explicitly signifying his concurrence and describing Lord Randolph Churchill's refusal to continue as Chairman of Council of the National Union as 'a good stroke of policy.' But it has since been suggested, upon apparently unimpeachable authority,[2] that Mr. Gorst disapproved of the reconciliation; that he thought greater advantage to the Conservative party would have followed from the prosecution of the dispute; and that he conceived himself in some measure deserted by its abandonment. Of Lord Randolph's behaviour to his able, energetic supporter the reader will be able to judge before the story is complete. But there is no doubt that Mr. Gorst was for a time, after the *concordat*, in a position of much

[1] See especially his letter to Mr. Harold Gorst of January 5, 1903, published in the *Times*, included as an Appendix.

[2] *Nineteenth Century*, January 1903, by Mr. Harold E. Gorst.

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weakness and isolation. He had incurred very bitter enmities by the part he had taken in the quarrel. It was especially resented that those talents of organisation which had so greatly aided the Tory victory of 1874, should have been employed against the recognised leaders of the Conservative party ten years later. Men who did not think it wise, in view of what had happened in the past, and still more of what might happen in the future, to anger Lord Randolph Churchill, were glad enough to indulge their spite upon Mr. Gorst. His real feeling — that he had been thrown over — must have become apparent to Lord Randolph Churchill, in spite of his written agreement in the course adopted; and a coolness ensued between them, diversified with occasional heats.

Sir Michael Hicks-Beach laid the National Union peacefully to rest in an obscurity from which its members have only emerged at infrequent intervals to pass Protectionist resolutions. Nearly twenty years elapsed before it recovered, at another Sheffield Conference, a passing shadow of its old importance, and the distinction which it achieved on that occasion may excuse the hope that its future repose will long remain unbroken.

The reconciliation of Lord Randolph Churchill with Lord Salisbury which followed on the Sheffield Conference, was comprehensive and loyally observed. The tactics of the Opposition became more effective in the House of Commons and their councils more harmonious. But strife in the constituencies was to succeed this session of

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storm and effort. Faced by the rejection of a great popular measure at the hands of hereditary legislators, the Liberal Government did not waver. The autumn was consumed in angry agitation and Parliament was specially summoned for a winter session to pass the Bill again. The Radicals were full of hope that no compromise would be offered or accepted. Never before or since had they laid hands upon so good a battering-ram as the Franchise Bill. Never since those days has the House of Lords placed itself on ground so insecure. But the pressure of public opinion proved effective; Mr. Gladstone was benevolent; and the Queen urgent for a settlement. Lord Randolph Churchill was deeply impressed with the danger of a continuance of the constitutional struggle between the Lords and the Commons. 'It was not a little owing to the urgency,' writes Sir Michael Hicks-Beach, 'with which he pressed on me the need of some arrangement that, with the consent of Lord Salisbury and Sir Stafford Northcote, I had the preliminary conferences with Lord Hartington which led to the more formal meetings of the leaders of both parties.' Finally, after weeks of haggling, expostulation, menace, and intrigue, it was finally arranged that the Franchise Bill should pass first and that Redistribution upon lines agreeable to both parties should follow forthwith.

To mark and proclaim the newly compacted alliance within the Conservative party, Sir Stafford Northcote came during the autumn recess to speak

in Lord Randolph's support at Birmingham. Of all the demonstrations organised against the House of Lords for its rejection of the Franchise Bill scarcely any had exceeded that held at Soho Pool, near Birmingham, on Bank Holiday. Aston Park, in the same neighbourhood, had been secured on October 13 by the Conservatives for a counter-demonstration, which was to open a week of campaigning throughout the district. Besides Sir Stafford and Lord Randolph Churchill, Colonel Burnaby and many other members of Parliament and candidates were to address the concourse at five simultaneous political meetings, and the well-known attractions of the Park and of the orators were to be strengthened by bands of music and a firework display. According to the Conservatives, the Aston demonstration was to represent the Midlands in general and Birmingham in particular, and special trains were run from all the surrounding constituencies with detachments of enthusiastic Tories and holiday-makers. 1884 ÆT. 35

These well-conceived arrangements caused much offence to the Radicals of Birmingham. They declared that an attempt was to be made to misrepresent the feeling of their city by importing outsiders and excursionists to swell the numbers of the demonstrators; and as the meetings had been called from the citizens of Birmingham and were in local parlance 'town meetings' rather than ordinary 'party meetings,' they resolved to attend them too. Admission to Aston Park was by ticket. It was stated that 120,000 tickets would be issued

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to those who applied for them. Everyone applied. Trade Union secretaries, great Liberal manufacturers like the Tangyes, officials of the Radical organisations, applied for, in some cases, as many as 800 at a time. The promoters of the demonstration became alarmed; and as it was now clear — and even avowed — that the Radicals would attend in force and spoil the effect, the issue of tickets was stopped and the applications were refused. Elaborate, formidable, and, as it proved, thoroughly effective measures were thereupon adopted to enable the voice of Birmingham to be heard. It became known that large numbers of tickets were being forged. Of course, no one in authority in the Liberal party lent any countenance to such proceedings. Mr. Schnadhorst went away for the day upon important business. A few working men — a mere handful of trampled toilers — spontaneously, with no help from their party, inspired by no other emotion than zeal for freedom and Reform, organised a counter-demonstration. The place of meeting was selected, by an unlucky coincidence, just outside the walls of Aston Park; and there also it happened that, on the appointed day, a cart containing ladders and other useful appliances drew up. The bills announcing this innocent counter-demonstration summoned the 'Men of Birmingham and the Midlands' to assemble for deliberation in Witton Road (just outside the Park), after which 'let all who can get admittance attend the Tory meetings, wear the Gladstone badge, and show you are not ashamed of your colours.'

In order that nothing should interfere with the discharge of these civic duties, Tangye's and other large works in the city closed for the afternoon. 1884 Æt. 35

The day arrived. The weather was suitable to outdoor political debate. The holders of tickets — forged or genuine — assembled by road and rail from all parts of the Midlands. The Aston grounds were soon crowded with demonstrators. Outside, the counter-demonstration, made up of three large processions, estimated at 15,000 strong, converged upon a waste plot of land hard by the Park wall. Individuals began to climb over but were stopped by broken glass. Earnest hands seized the ladders which stood there by chance and the broken glass was demolished. A waggon which had served as the platform was dragged towards the wall; and by this, by the ladders, and also, it appears, by a convenient tree, many persons swarmed over. Inside they found a single policeman, who could do nothing to gainsay them, and a tool-house containing a number of planks. By using the planks as battering-rams a breach was made in the wall and thousands of excited people poured through it into the Park to join by force their friends who had entered by fraud.

The open-air meetings were broken up by riot. Stones, potatoes, and even chairs were flung at the members of Parliament who attempted to address the crowd. The platform of the great hall was stormed. Sir Stafford Northcote, who showed much pluck throughout these turbulent experiences which

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his physical condition ill fitted him to endure, and Lord Randolph Churchill were overwhelmed by furious clamour and finally driven from the hall in the midst of a battle royal of sticks and chair-legs. Lord Randolph, not following promptly enough, was picked up and carried away bodily by a burly admirer from Wolverhampton. The crowd at first followed at a walk and afterwards at a run, and so menacing and dangerous was their temper that Sir Stafford Northcote was dragged along by his guards at full speed and even so narrowly avoided capture. Other members of Parliament had rougher experiences and Mr. Darling[1] was lucky to make an escape from a window before the door of the room in which he had taken refuge was battered down. The platform of the Skating Rink collapsed while a free-fight was raging upon it. The fireworks perished ignominiously in broad daylight; the set-piece of Sir Stafford Northcote being received with storms of groans and fired off, by a refinement of cruelty, *upside down*. Such were the Aston riots. No persons were actually killed in them, but not a few were seriously injured, and hundreds carried away scars and bruises from the fray.

The indignation caused among the Conservatives of Birmingham, and indeed throughout the country, by these events was fierce and bitter. Lord Randolph Churchill turned to the fullest advantage the blunder into which his adversaries had been drawn. Every day for a week, in spite of repeated threats of

[1] Now Sir Charles Darling.

personal violence, he journeyed to and fro in Birmingham and in a series of speeches, published and read in every part of the country, he fastened the responsibility for disorder and intimidation upon Mr. Chamberlain and his Caucus. He urged Conservative working men to take effective measures to protect themselves from tyranny and not to hesitate to meet force by force. 'I do not think,' he said, 'the Conservative party ought to look to the police for assistance. We are quite capable of taking care of ourselves.' Formal resolutions were accordingly passed by Conservative Clubs, pledging themselves to take concerted measures of defence and of reprisal. Upon the connection of the Birmingham Corporation with Radical politics he was explicit. 1884 Æt. 35

The contest in Birmingham is not a contest, such as is carried on in other constituencies in England, between party and party. It is a contest between popular self-government and a corrupt oligarchy; between electoral freedom and Russian despotism; between open dealing and Venetian espionage; between individual security and public order and all the resources and ingenuity of terror and intimidation. The whole of the governing power of the borough of Birmingham is almost absolutely in the hands of the Caucus. The patronage disposed of is enormous. The Caucus, acting under the name of the Corporation, own the gasworks; they own the water supply; they control the lunatic asylums; they control the grammar school; they control some large establishments in the nature of a drainage farm; they manipulate the borough funds to the extent of nearly one million a year; they pay something like 80,000*l.* a year in wages; and their number of employees, as far as I can ascertain, is about 25,000. And all these enormous

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resources are directed principally, not so much to the good of the town of Birmingham, as to the maintenance of the power of the Caucus. Every one of their employees knows that he holds his office, his position, his employment, upon the distinct understanding that in all political and municipal matters he must blindly submit himself; and upon the slightest sign even of independence — to say nothing of opposition — he will lose his employment; he will be thrown upon the world with all his family, even if it should lead to his ruin or his starvation.

These charges were furiously denied, and were no doubt exaggerated in form; but they bore a sufficiently accurate and substantial relation to circumstances well within the knowledge of Birmingham citizens to be highly damaging. Moreover, the argument that the Radical party, although already possessed of all the machinery of national government, were preparing — by the abolition of the Second Chamber on the one hand, and the suppression of public meetings on the other — to subvert the Constitution and to enter upon revolutionary paths, gained acceptance in England far beyond the ordinary limits of Conservative opinion.

So soon as Parliament met, a week later, for the winter session, Lord Randolph placed upon the paper an amendment to the Address taking the form of a vote of censure on Mr. Chamberlain for speeches which encouraged interference with freedom of discussion and incited to riot and disorder. The debate was heralded for several days by much preliminary snarling. Mr. Chamberlain, irritated by constant cross-questioning, referred to Sir Henry Wolff as

Lord Randolph Churchill's 'jackal.' 'With his usual insolence,' observed Sir Henry Wolff in reply; and, on being rebuked by the Speaker, he substituted 'with his usual courtesy.' Mr. Chaplin inquired whether the President of the Local Government Board would not proceed to describe his opponents as 'hyænas'; and Lord Randolph Churchill, availing himself of the Speaker's ruling that the word 'jackal,' if looked upon as a figurative expression, was not out of order, proceeded to state that at the earliest possible opportunity he would move his amendment and 'draw the badger.' 1884 ÆT. 35

This occasion was provided on October 30, and led to a singularly unpleasant debate. Lord Randolph Churchill quoted numerous extracts from Mr. Chamberlain's speeches. He asserted that no Minister of the Crown had ever used such language and that Irish members had been committed to prison for language much less strong. He declared that Mr. Chamberlain knew beforehand of the counter-demonstration and of what it was intended to effect and that he might easily have prevented the riot had he chosen to do so. Mr. Chamberlain exerted himself greatly, and not unsuccessfully, in replying. He in his turn was able to discover in Lord Randolph Churchill's speeches some traces of violent language. He flatly denied that he had had any personal complicity in the riot, which, he explained, had arisen solely from the mismanagement of the Tory organisation and from their attempt to give their meeting the character of a

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national demonstration. But the most effective part of his speech consisted in a number of affidavits of roughs, said to have been engaged by the Secretary of the Conservative Association to turn out Liberals from the meeting, whose violence it was alleged had provoked the outbreak. When he sat down he had in great measure stemmed the tide which had been running strongly against him. As his speech was drawing to a close Lord Randolph leaned across the gangway and asked Sir Michael Hicks-Beach if he would reply. Sir Michael, much impressed by Mr. Chamberlain's argument, declined; but Sir Hardinge Giffard, to whom Lord Randolph then turned, stepped into the breach, and with little premeditation made a most admirable and effective rejoinder, which swayed the opinion of the House and threw the gravest doubt upon the authenticity and credibility of the documents from which Mr. Chamberlain had quoted. Upon the division Lord Randolph's amendment was defeated by 214 to 178. 'The majority,' observes the *Annual Register*, 'exonerating Mr. Chamberlain from any blameworthy act, was far smaller than a member of the Cabinet commanding the confidence and sympathy of his supporters had a right to expect.'

The dispute was then carried by both parties into the Courts. The summonses and counter-summonses were heard together at Birmingham on successive days during the month of November, and when Mr. Chamberlain was examined as a witness (November 26) attempts were made to fix upon him

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the responsibility of suggesting that the affidavits should be procured. But he denied it. On December 6, the compromise upon the Franchise and Redistribution Bill having been achieved nearly three weeks before, the proceedings came to an abrupt close. But at the Assizes (February 28 and March 2, 1885) a man named Peter Joyce, said to be 'Larry Mack,' a notorious rough whose affidavit had been quoted in Parliament, was tried before Mr. Justice Field on the charge of criminal libel and sentenced, despite the lukewarmness of the prosecution and strong recommendation to mercy, to six weeks' imprisonment. A Liberal of respectable antecedents was found guilty of having had the 'forged tickets' printed and was heavily fined. No evidence was ever produced to sustain any charge against Mr. Chamberlain of having himself fomented the disorders; but an impression was created that the whole affair — especially the discharging of the fireworks upside down — showed that he had been only partially successful in exerting those influences of moral restraint which are so much to be commended in political leaders during times of popular excitement.

The Aston riots led to some curious consequences. When Lord Randolph was arranging for the prosecutions of the 'roughs' whose depositions Mr. Chamberlain had read to the House of Commons, he asked one of his friends to find him a lawyer of repute who would conduct the case so as to make 'as much political capital out of it as possible.' A Mr. Henry Matthews — already a barrister of distinction

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upon the Midland Circuit — was recommended to him. They met at dinner on two successive nights. Lord Randolph was perfectly delighted with his conversation and his personality and formed the very highest opinion of his powers. At his insistence Mr. Matthews became a candidate for a Birmingham seat. Eighteen months later, when he was reading in the Athenæum Club the newspaper rumours of the composition of Lord Salisbury's second Administration, he was startled and astonished by Lord Randolph breaking in upon him with the offer of the office of Home Secretary.

The course of their violent political quarrels and the harsh language and personal charges with which they were accompanied produced a total breach in Lord Randolph's private friendship with Mr. Chamberlain. They no longer addressed or saluted each other and such correspondence as was necessary was conducted on both sides with frigid formality. Thus: —

House of Commons: October 28.

Mr. Chamberlain presents his compliments to Lord R. Churchill and begs to thank him for his courtesy in communicating the grounds on which he is prepared to support the charge which he has brought against Mr. Chamberlain.

Lord Randolph had been much exhausted in health and strength by the unremitting exertions of the year, and late in November it was announced that he purposed to start almost immediately for a four months' holiday to India. Mr. Chamberlain no

sooner heard this than he was anxious to make friends. His letter speaks for itself: — 1884 ÆT. 35

Mr. Chamberlain to Lord Randolph Churchill.

40 Prince's Gardens, S.W.: November 27, 1884.

My dear Churchill, — You see that I have returned to the old superscription. If you object, I will not offend again; but I do not like to allow you to leave the country for what, I understand, is a long voyage, necessitated by circumstances that I sincerely regret, without saying that recent occurrences have, in my case at all events, left no personal bitterness behind.

I am sorry that we have been forced into public conflict: I should be still more sorry if political opposition degenerated into a private quarrel.

I heartily wish you a pleasant holiday, and hope that rest and change of scene may thoroughly restore your health and strength.

Believe me,
Sans rancune,
Yours very truly,
J. CHAMBERLAIN.

Lord Randolph Churchill to Mr. Chamberlain.

2 Connaught Place, W.: November 27, 1884.

My dear Mr. Chamberlain, — I hasten to answer your very kind letter, which caused me the greatest pleasure.

I had always hoped that the friendship which existed between us and which, for my part, I most highly valued, might at all times be altogether unaffected by any Parliamentary conflicts, however brisk, and even sharp, the latter might be.

It is indeed very pleasant to me to know from the generous expressions in your letter that my hopes are in no way illusory, and as long as I continue in politics it will be a source of pride to me to endeavour to the best of my

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abilities to mitigate the asperities of party warfare as far as you and I are concerned. I am not likely to forget that in the last Parliament you gave me the most valuable and effective support in a matter in which at that time I was greatly interested, without which support I should have been unsuccessful.

I like to think that it is neither impossible nor improbable that political circumstances may from time to time find us again in agreement; and although your position and power will be far above mine, I shall be on the look-out for those occasions.

Believe me, I am very sensible of your amiable wishes as to the results of my travels to India, and that I hope always to remain

Yours very sincerely,
RANDOLPH S. CHURCHILL.

One more incident which arose out of the Reform Bill must be noticed in its place. When Parliament assembled for the winter session the Conservative leaders agreed with Lord Randolph Churchill to offer a regular though perfunctory resistance to the second passage of the Reform Bill through the House of Commons, in order to strengthen the position of the House of Lords in effecting the compromise which was now recognised as inevitable. Lord Randolph accordingly placed on the paper an amendment to the second reading, setting forth 'that any measure purporting to provide for the better representation of the people must be accompanied by provisions for the proper arrangement of electoral areas.' This seemed to repeat as a general principle the amendment which Colonel Stanley had moved as a precise instruction on May 23, when the Bill was for the first time in

Committee, which amendment Lord Randolph and the Fourth Party had opposed and indeed denounced. The political situation was entirely changed; but the verbal similarity did not escape one acute, retentive mind.

In Lord Randolph's absence at the funeral of Lord Londonderry his amendment was moved by Mr. Stanhope. To the surprise of his party Mr. Gorst rose from below the gangway and thereupon criticised and opposed the amendment in terms which bore a sufficiently close resemblance to those in which Lord Randolph had opposed it when it had last been moved. By this very able and perfectly consistent speech Mr. Gorst gave great offence to all sections of the Conservative party, who were now united in an embrace of unaffected love. Lord Randolph, when he read the newspapers next day, accepted it as a personal declaration of war. He was very angry. 'Gorst,' he said, 'must be punished'; and accordingly on the next sitting of the House (November 7) he administered to his mutinous lieutenant a castigation prolonged, deliberate, and severe. 'I have yet to learn,' he observed, with undisturbed gravity, 'that either the traditions of party warfare or Parliamentary etiquette teaches one to desert one's party and stand aloof from it and refrain from giving assistance to it, simply because of the very inadequate and miserable reason that in one's own poor and very feeble judgment one does not altogether approve of the course which may have led them into that difficulty.' The mirth which this grimace excited was strengthened

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by the joy and relief alike of Government and Opposition at the breaking-up of the formidable confederacy at whose hands they had endured so much.

On December 3 Lord Randolph sailed in the *Rohilla* for India. Since the beginning of history many travellers have visited the East. Few have neglected to record their adventures. But if the reader is inclined to follow the subject of this story into an atmosphere remote from that of Westminster his own letters will be found to supply an easy and connected narrative.[1] After several years of strife he entered upon a brief interval of peace. The battles of the Reform Bill had ended in a compromise far less unsatisfactory to Tory interests than could have been expected. The agitation which menaced the House of Lords was at an end. His dispute with Lord Salisbury was settled. The Conservative party had acclaimed the return of the prodigal son. The Aston riots were forgotten in his renewed friendship with Mr. Chamberlain. And as the English coast-line faded, a passing temper of tranquil benevolence led him to send through Wolff messages of amity to all his friends — 'even to the erring Gorst.'

[1] Appendix IV. See especially his description of the tiger hunt.

CHAPTER IX

THE FALL OF THE GOVERNMENT

'Of this, however, I am well persuaded, that it is better to be impetuous than cautious. For Fortune is a woman who to be kept under must be beaten and roughly handled; and we see that she suffers herself to be more readily mastered by those who treat her so, than by those who are more timid in their approaches. And always, like a woman, she favours the young, because they are less scrupulous and fiercer, and command her with greater audacity.'—MACHIAVELLI: *The Prince*, chapter xxv.

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THIS account, which has hitherto been concerned with the doings of Lord Randolph Churchill and the steps by which he attained power in his party and in Parliament, must now for a time be greatly extended. However strictly the thread of personal narrative be followed, biography broadens insensibly into history, and the career of a private member becomes a recognisable part of the fortunes of the nation. We enter upon a period of tumult and change. Within little more than a year two General Elections were fought and four separate Administrations took their seats on the Treasury Bench. In order to find an equal convulsion it is necessary to go back almost exactly a hundred years, to the time between the fall of Lord North's Administration in 1782 and the final triumph of Mr. Pitt after his dissolution in 1784. In

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each period Ministries were constructed and fell like houses of cards; in each a new, young figure sprang suddenly into universal attention; in each, one of the historic parties in the State entered into a disastrous coalition; and the other, after taking office in a minority, secured a predominance which lasted for a generation.

The Administration of 1880 tottered to its fall in tragedy and disaster. General Gordon perished and Khartoum fell in February. The expeditionary columns recoiled in sorrow and failure from the desert and the Nile. The Queen telegraphed her displeasure openly to the Prime Minister; and on a vote of censure the Government escaped only by a majority of fourteen (February 27). Few more critical divisions have been taken in modern times; for the defection of eight more discontented Whigs or Liberals would have procured a dissolution before either the Reform or Redistribution Act could have come into operation. In the temper of the moment, upon the votes of the old electorate, the Conservative party could hardly have failed to gain a clear majority. With such a prize in view the attacks of the Opposition increased in vehemence, bitterness, and effect. Votes of censure succeeded each other with almost bewildering rapidity. Early in the year Mr. Chamberlain began to proclaim the new demands of Radicalism in a series of crudely impressive speeches. Nationalist Ireland struggled in the grip of Dublin Castle. The menace of Russian aggression towards the Indian frontier grew into reality. Dynamite explosions tore

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up the Treasury Bench and shook the structure of Westminster Hall. A momentous General Election drew near. It was indeed, as Mr. Gladstone noted in his diary, 'a time of *Sturm und Drang*.'

Lord Randolph Churchill returned from India in March, to find himself in a position of unusual importance. He had won no battle, negotiated no peace; he had passed no great measure of reform; he had never held public office; he was not even a Privy Councillor; yet he was welcomed on all sides with interest or acclamation. The political temperature was steadily rising with the approach of the General Election. The Fourth Party received him with joy and the House of Commons with satisfaction. Mr. Gladstone in his courtly way walked across the House to shake hands with him. His absence had been felt on his own side. He was looked to as a man who would infuse a belligerent energy into the Opposition and range their lines for the impending battle. It was evident to all men that he occupied a position in which he might turn the balance of many great things. 'What place will you give him when the Government is formed?' Sir Stafford Northcote was asked by a friend. 'Say rather,' replied the leader of the Opposition, 'what place will he give me?' 'I had no idea,' said Lord Randolph calmly when this was repeated to him, 'that he had so much wit.'

The passage of a year had wrought important changes. Birmingham, divided by the Reform Bill into seven seats, was no longer the great three-member constituency which had invited him to

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stand. Colonel Burnaby, his good comrade, had been killed at Abu Klea.[1] But the Central Division sent a pressing requisition. Although the acceptance involved a direct contest with Mr. Bright himself, Lord Randolph considered himself bound by his former promise to come forward; but, lest fortune should be adverse in Birmingham, Mr. Kerans voluntarily withdrew from the candidature of South Paddington, so that that seat also might be at his disposal.

It is not easy to estimate, and quite impossible to explain, the personal ascendency which he had by this time acquired in the House of Commons. The Conservative Opposition almost instinctively yielded to his decisions. His authority seemed to have grown in his absence. On the motion to go into Committee on the Egyptian Loan Bill (April 16) Sir Richard Cross moved an amendment urging that the Suez Canal Convention should be submitted to the House before it was finally settled. The ground was ill-chosen and the occasion inauspicious. The speech of the mover could not fully surmount these disadvantages. But the amendment was moved with all the sanction and authority of the official Opposition, and the party Whips had summoned their followers from far and near to support it. Lord Randolph Churchill made a short speech, suave and friendly in substance, elaborately polite in form, but with just a suspicion of irony. He deprecated the amendment. He persuaded both sides of the House that it was unfortunate. The debate came abruptly to a conclusion. All

[1] January 17, 1885.

determination of dividing oozed out of the Opposition. The amendment was withdrawn. This was a typical incident. 1885 Æt. 36

Lord Randolph had returned from India at a time when Indian problems occupied all minds. The turbulence of English politics was hushed for a space by a perilous interlude. In the year 1884, after the occupation of Merv, the Russian Empire attained the limits of its expansion southwards and came at last into contact with the territories of the Amir, to whom, by the engagements of 1880, Great Britain had given a pledge of protection against external aggression. A joint demarcation of the northern boundary of Afghanistan was decided on by the British and Russian Governments, from the Persian border eastwards to a point on the Oxus, beyond which that river had been recognised by the agreement of 1873 as constituting the limits of Afghan territory. The Commissioners of the two Powers had met on the frontier in November 1884, and devoted themselves to their task with that air of leisurely diligence inseparable from international undertakings. On March 30 the tangled negotiations were torn to pieces by an act of violence. While diplomatists were groping for scientific frontiers upon imperfect maps and amid unfamiliar names, General Komaroff advanced, 'covenant' notwithstanding, collided with the Afghan pickets upon the debatable ground, and in a short but bloody action at Penjdeh drove the Amir's forces from the field. All England was stirred. The newspapers were hot to counsel

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war. A wave of double panic swept across the country. The national temper rose and the funds fell. A period of acute suspense followed.

On all that concerned the safety of India Lord Randolph spoke in picturesque and thoughtful language. 'Our rule in India,' he said at the Primrose League banquet in the St. James's Hall on April 18, 'is, as it were, a sheet of oil spread out over the surface of, and keeping calm and quiet and unruffled by storms, an immense and profound ocean of humanity. Underneath that rule lie hidden all the memories of fallen dynasties, all the traditions of vanquished races, all the pride of insulted creeds. . . .' He spoke of the advance of Russia on the North-West Frontier — 'that sometimes stealthy, sometimes open, always gradual, always sure advance of countless hosts, now resembling the gliding of a serpent, now the bound of a tiger' — as a perpetual injury to stability and progress in the Government and people of India. And his counsels, like those of Lord Salisbury, seemed full of the menace of war.

On April 27 Mr. Gladstone asked the House of Commons for his vote of credit of 11,000,000*l.* He unfolded the 'case for preparation' in an impressive harangue. Tory blood, long chilled, stirred in his veins. The eloquence and authority of his great war speech covered everything behind it — even the total abandonment of the Soudan, which was foreshadowed almost incidentally — and carried everything before it. He sat down while the House was ringing with the united acclamations of Radicals who hated war

and of Tories who hated him. The debate collapsed. Notices of motion and amendment disappeared as if by magic. The vote was carried without a single protest. 1885 Æt. 36

But it was no part of the policy of the Opposition to allow Mr. Gladstone to obtain personal triumphs of this character. Though for the time they were dazzled by his rhetoric, they felt no confidence that the honour of the country was safe in his hands; and the parlous condition to which British relations with Russia had come, only made them more anxious to get possession of the Government. Lord Randolph, who had freed himself altogether from the Gladstone spell, saw in the collapse of the debate only another proof of that feeble and ineffective leadership of the Opposition against which he had warred so ruthlessly. Hitherto his communications with Lord Salisbury had been scanty and formal. Since the settlement of the National Union dispute no letters had passed between them; and although they were supposed to be working in harmonious agreement, they hardly knew each other at all. But Lord Randolph's vexation prompted him to write with much more freedom than he had yet allowed himself; and this proved the beginning of an intimate correspondence and association only to cease after the crisis in British politics was over.

Private. Turf Club, Piccadilly: April 27, 1885. 11 P.M.

Dear Lord Salisbury, — The Opposition cannot be conducted to any other goal but smash if things are to go on as they did to-night. At first all went well. We divided, and were only beaten by 43 — a respectable position, the only

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unpleasant feature of which was the slack attendance of our party. A four-line whip had been out for a week. Many telegrams had been despatched yesterday, and yet only about 160 Tories came up to the scratch. The worst was to come, and I blame myself as much as anyone for what happened. Mr. Gladstone was evidently much annoyed by the opposition to his vote of credit arrangements and commenced his statement in Committee by the most wanton, outrageous, violent, and yet wretchedly weak attack upon the late Government. He then went on into a very elaborate and easily exposed apology for the evacuation of the Soudan, and finally wound up (and this part I did not hear) with a very warlike denunciation of Russian aggression, which H. Fowler of the Home Office told me he thought was too strong. Would you believe it? The whole Front Opposition Bench sat as mute as mummies — though, after all, it was they who had been flouted — and the Prime Minister got his 11,000,000*l.* at one gulp, without a remark of any sort or kind. I have not really the right to complain or criticise, as I went away in the middle of his speech to dine; but it never occurred to me for a moment that Sir S. N. would allow his intemperate remarks to pass unnoticed, or that the debate would collapse in such an ignominious manner for the Opposition.

It is quite possible that the Metropolitan Press may not notice this so strongly, but the Liberal provincial Press will; and the fact remains that at this time of day Gladstone has the audacity to revive in their worst form all the stale and exploded charges against the Beaconsfield Government, and that Northcote, the man most concerned, has not a word to say in reply. The effect in the House of Commons has been deplorable. All the Liberals are cock-a-whoop, and Gladstone has been allowed to obtain, gratuitously, an unparalleled Parliamentary triumph. It is probable that in the next few weeks crisis and sensation will follow each other closely. You know that under these circumstances, in the House of Commons, if the leader of the Opposition does

not move, no one else can; and if to-night's proceedings are to be repeated, we are done. Excuse, I pray you, a hurried scrawl. I thought you might like to have an account fresh from the House of Commons.

Yours very sincerely,

RANDOLPH S. CHURCHILL.

The reply was prompt and friendly.

'I sympathise with you very heartily,' replied Lord Salisbury late the same night. 'But what *can* I do? It is not a case where advice would be of any service. In fact, I sometimes think my advice does more harm than good; for, if only partially followed, it may produce exactly the reverse of the intended effect. I hope the papers will attribute the collapse to our exalted patriotism. At least, that is the only hope with which one can console oneself.'

Lord Randolph wrote again: —

Private and Confidential. Carlton Club: April 28, 1885.

Dear Lord Salisbury, — I have been thinking of nothing else but the events of last night in the House of Commons and, encouraged by your kind note received this morning, I venture to inflict upon you another letter.

The tone of the Metropolitan Press this morning is not unfavourable to us; but the Metropolitan Press is most misleading. I see every day the provincial Press, and I know well how in their London correspondence and in their articles they will magnify the personal triumph of Mr. Gladstone. He had been running down for some time, but has now, *for the time,* completely recovered his old position by the extraordinary and unprecedented *coup* he carried off last night. That *coup* has done us, as a party, more real harm with the constituencies than any event in this Parliament which I can remember. This sort of thing did not matter in 1880; but we are now within six months of a General

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Election, and any event which greatly elevates the Liberals and depresses our own people has a terrible effect. That triumph of last night will be repeated unless very decided and energetic steps are taken now. The personal ascendency of Mr. Gladstone is our great difficulty. If we can destroy or mitigate that, we gain adherents. I know what the little Fourth Party did in '80 and '81 and what support and sympathy they acquired in the country on that account. That old Fourth Party has disappeared; but the time has come when another body of the same nature, but on much better and weightier lines, might be formed, and might effect astonishing Parliamentary success.

I quite perceive that anything in the nature of open revolt against Sir S. N. would be fatal in every way. At the same time *it is madness* to blind yourself to the fact that whatever abilities he once possessed for guiding a party are utterly gone and that his influence upon the vigour and vitality of the party now enervates and enfeebles; and *that* at a moment when the greatest possible party life and vigour is a matter of life and death.

I have suggested to Sir Michael Hicks-Beach that he should remain permanently in town for the remainder of the Session and should be always in the House of Commons when it is sitting; and I have told him that if he can pledge himself to this, I believe a certain number of M.P.'s would pledge themselves to be always at his back. I allude principally to the old Fourth Party, to Raikes and Chaplin, to Dyke and Gibson, and to one or two more very talented and ambitious young members of the party. The effect of the constant attendance and skilful action of such a body night after night upon the Government cannot be over-estimated. It might lead them to throw up the sponge, either by one or more unexpected defeats. But, in any case, it would keep our party in the country alive and in good heart and should supply them with endless topics for local controversy. It is absolutely essential that some member of real position and influence upon the Front Bench should be at the head of such

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a combination. The weakness of the old Fourth Party was that they had no *point d'appui;* they were always a body of skirmishers altogether *en l'air.* And yet House of Commons history would be altogether misread if their disintegrating effect upon the Liberal party was underestimated or ignored. To show you what might have been done last night, I have ascertained from so reliable a source as Lord R. Grosvenor that all the elements of the Courtney faction and the Labouchere faction might have been let loose last night, if only Sir S. N. had not weakly yielded to an evanescent impression created by Gladstone's gingerbread rhetoric, and allowed the debate to collapse. I think under high persuasion Sir M. Hicks-Beach would be prepared to make great sacrifices and run some personal risks, and it is for that reason that I bring all these matters to your notice. I may, without overmuch presumption, claim some little authority on these party interests. My letters to the *Times* in 1882 and my article in the *Fortnightly* clearly foretold the ultimate effect of Sir S. N.'s leadership. They brought much odium upon me at the time and may indeed have embarrassed persons I wished not to embarrass, but my word has been justified by events and by present public opinion.

I pray you not to allow yourself to imagine that either then or now was I or am I actuated by much, or indeed any, personal ambition. My only desire is to see the game properly and scientifically played, and the Conservative party fairly strong in the next Parliament; and I do not care a rap who carries off the laurels or the credit. The plan I propose for efficient Parliamentary action during the remainder of the Session may be skilfully carried out without any formal communication to Sir S. N. But not only does it depend upon Sir Michael being supported by a certain number of M.P.'s; that body will have to be inspired by yourself and will have to show that in their action they are receiving and deserving your support and approval.

I am ashamed of myself for worrying you with this

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interminable MS. It is only the critical condition of our party prospects which enables me to do it.

Yours very sincerely,

Randolph S. Churchill.

'I concur very much,' wrote Lord Salisbury in answer to this lengthy appeal, 'in your estimate of the evil; and your idea of surrounding the Sultan with a body of Janissaries under Sir M. Beach is likely to be very effective if vigorously carried out. I will gladly do anything I can to help, but always with one reservation. I am bound to Sir S. N. — as a colleague — by a tie, not of expediency, but of honour; and I could not take part in anything which would be at variance with entire loyalty to him. But what you propose will rather take the form of assistance than supersession. I think that, properly managed, your *jeune garde* may do great things and acquire considerable practical authority. I will talk the matter over with Beach whenever I can see him. But he must abandon agriculture.'

The Conservative party had repented of their enthusiasm by May 4, when the Committee stage of the vote of credit was again set down for discussion. The decision to abandon the Soudan altogether and admit defeat in that quarter of the world had soaked in. They now learned, besides, that — vote of 11,000,000*l.* notwithstanding — Anglo-Russian differences were to be submitted to arbitration — 'surrender disguised as arbitration,' as Lord Randolph Churchill called it. They were indignant at what they considered a betrayal. But how to

show their displeasure? Sir Michael Hicks-Beach protested against the vote of credit being proceeded with in the altered circumstances without further delay. Lord Randolph, who had a speech all ready, intimated meekly that, unless the vote of credit was forthwith debated, he would obstruct the passage of Supply. The Government, anxious to get their business through, and uncertain which section in the Opposition would prove the more recalcitrant, proposed a compromise. Lord Randolph waved it aside and remained obdurate. The vote of credit came on at once. 1885 Æt. 36

The speech which he then delivered was a speech of minute detail, but of accurate detail. In twenty-four hours he had mastered an enormous Blue Book. No one could contradict him at any point. 'So far as I know,' said Lord Salisbury later, 'that description [of Russian proceedings] is historically unimpeachable.' Into the entanglements of General Komaroff's action, of the strategic value of Merv, of the opinions of Baron Jomini, or of the territorial rights of the Amir in the disputed regions of the Murghab and Khushk rivers it is not, fortunately, necessary to enter. But one episode in Lord Randolph's second speech on May 11 is worthy of record. The complacency with which the Government, and particularly the Prime Minister, had abandoned, in the Soudan, enterprises for the sake of which so many lives, British and Arab, had been sacrificed, had excited general wonder and even disgust.

'I was reading in the *Times* this morning,' said

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Lord Randolph, dropping his voice and buttoning up his coat — 'does the Prime Minister ever read the *Times?*' Mr. Gladstone tossed his head disdainfully. 'It is a pity, because if the Prime Minister had read the *Times* this morning he could not have failed to notice the review of a very interesting book — "The Home Letters of Lord Beaconsfield" — edited by Mr. Ralph Disraeli, who is, I believe, a friend of the Prime Minister's.' ('Nothing of the sort,' said Mr. Gladstone.) 'Lord Beaconsfield, it appears, went many years ago to Yanina, where he had an interview with a very celebrated Minister — Redschid Pasha. There had recently been a great insurrection in Albania which had been put down by the Turks. This is Lord Beaconsfield's account of the interview: "I bowed with all the nonchalance of St. James's Street to a little, ferocious-looking, shrivelled, careworn man, plainly dressed, with a brow covered with wrinkles and a countenance clouded with anxiety and thought. I seated myself on the divan of the Grand Vizier ('who,' the Austrian Consul observed, 'has destroyed in the course of the last three months — not in war — upwards of four thousand of my acquaintance') with the self-possession of a morning call. Our conversation I need not repeat. We congratulated him on the pacification of Albania. He rejoined that the peace of the world was his only object and the happiness of mankind his only wish."' Here there was a long pause, intensified by the hush with which the House awaited the delayed conclusion. 'There,'

cried Lord Randolph, raising his voice suddenly, hissing his words and pointing savagely across the House at Mr. Gladstone — 'there, upon the Treasury Bench, is the resuscitated Redschid Pasha.' 1885 Æt. 36

I have tried to revive the spirit of this attack as some of those who listened describe it, for *Hansard* reduces it to a very bald account. But, although Lord Randolph Churchill never commanded the surge and majesty of Mr. Gladstone's oratory, he held the House docile and responsive in his grip. Whatever liberties he chose to take, they chose to cheer. So through a speech of an hour and a half, all devoted to a pitiless reproach of 'that policy of base and cowardly surrender to Russia which marks your daily life.' Was it wonderful that party newspapers and party men rallied to this bold champion of their grievances? 'Why was it left to Lord Randolph Churchill,' they asked, 'alone to raise a protest against Mr. Gladstone's treacherous conduct? Where were the occupants of the Front Opposition Bench? Have they resigned their functions? If so, let them resign their position'; and so forth. The next day Lord Granville took occasion to refer to this speech at length in the House of Lords. He declared that he had marked no less than nine passages, 'some of them inaccurate and some exactly opposed to the truth.' Lord Randolph rejoined, through the columns of the *Times*, in a celebrated — or perhaps I should write 'notorious' — letter. He accused Lord Granville, among other things, of showing

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'the petty malice of a Whig'; 'of his usual shamelessness'; and of 'sneaking down to the House of Lords to make without notice a variety of deliberate misrepresentations, deliberate misquotations, and false assertions which were quite in accordance with the little that was known about the public career of Earl Granville, Knight of the Garter, and, to the misfortune of his country, Her Majesty's principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.' The *Times* was so horrified at this that, not content with printing the letter in a column of its largest type, it devoted another column and a half to repeating, for the purpose of dissociating itself from, its insults, and rebuking the bad taste of the author.

But the fate of the Government was not to be settled by anything arising out of the stormy events in the East. Another cause, nearer home and more intimately affecting party politics, was to operate decisively. The Crimes Act was to expire in August. Lord Spencer insisted upon its renewal and his demand was backed by most of the Whig Ministers. The Radical representatives, however, refused to associate themselves with such legislation and moderate Liberals were scarcely less reluctant to tar their hands with Coercion before presenting themselves to the electors as the champions of liberty. On May 15 Mr. Gladstone gave notice that the Government would propose what was, at any rate, a partial continuation of the measure. Five days later Lord Randolph Churchill, at the St. Stephen's Club,

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struck what was, according to Mr. Morley, a mortal blow. He intimated that a Conservative Government would not think it necessary to renew the Act. His language was guarded and carefully chosen. He had to carry his audience with him and he knew with what satisfaction many of his colleagues in the House of Commons would repudiate his words if they thought their repudiation would be effective. He said, in short, that he was shocked that so grave an announcement as the renewal of a Coercion Bill should be taken as a matter of course. The state of Ireland must be much worse than was commonly supposed for the Radical members of the Cabinet to assent to such a proposal. What a comment it was on Liberal administration, and on the boasted Viceroyalty of Lord Spencer, that the Liberal party could not govern Ireland without that arbitrary force 'which all their greatest orators have over and over again declared is no remedy for lawlessness!' 'I believe most firmly,' he concluded, 'that this ought to be the attitude of the Tory party — that while they are ready and willing to grant to any Government of the Queen whatever powers may be necessary, on evidence adduced, for the preservation of law and order, they ought to be anxious and careful beyond measure not to be committed to any act or policy which should unnecessarily wound and injure the feelings and the sentiments of our brothers on the other side of the Channel of St. George.' That was all, but it was enough. The speaker was not disavowed. The Tory party remained mute. The

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words were observed and weighed both by the Irish Nationalists and the English Radicals. Within a few days Mr. Morley gave a notice of motion to oppose the renewal of the Crimes Act. The Radical members of the Cabinet stiffened their backs, and the days of the Ministry were numbered.

As the weakness and embarrassments of the Government and the dissensions in the Cabinet became glaring, it was evident the end could not be distant. But no one could tell when the moment would come; and the imminent possibility of a transference of power forced grave considerations into the minds of the chiefs of the Opposition. They hated the Government. They believed its continuance to be deeply injurious to the country. They were mortified by the dishonour which had been inflicted on British arms and British reputation. The cry of their supporters in the country for unceasing Parliamentary attack was vehement. They were bound to fight their hardest. But, upon the other hand, what if they succeeded? They could not dissolve, because of the Reform Bill. Until the new registers for the reconstructed constituencies had been prepared, and other indispensable mechanical details settled, a General Election was physically impossible. Could they, then, take office? Even if some Ministers were anxious to escape from power, willing to ride for a fall — and this was certainly not the disposition of the Prime Minister — the Government majority was enormous. The only chance of overturning the Gladstone Administration was by a division on some issue which

should at once divide the Liberals and secure the Irish vote. No mere lukewarmness on the part of Ministerialists would suffice.

It was quite plain that an incoming Government, in a minority, without the power of dissolution, brought into office by Nationalist votes, could never carry a Coercion Bill through Parliament. But was a Coercion Bill necessary? Mr. Gibson on whom the Conservatives relied as their Irish authority, was of opinion that it would not be necessary. But certainly Mr. Parnell could make it necessary! The question was long and painfully debated. Clearly they had to fight. Not to do so was to discourage the whole party on the eve of the election. Clearly they might win. To refuse then to undertake the task, to admit that the Conservative party had neither the men nor the cohesion to carry on the Government, would equally injure them in the national estimation. It was a grim dilemma. But the decision did not lie altogether in the hands of particular men. Had it been possible for any one man to give orders which would be obeyed with military discipline, he could not have failed, were he a Conservative, to decide against any attempt to turn out the Government; and, conversely, a Minister must have sought for any decent pretext to resign. But the forces at work were not to be so nicely governed. It is in the nature of Ministries to survive in spite of their inclinations. It is in the nature of Oppositions to strive to win, even in spite of their interests. Borne along by the stream, the Conservative

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leaders determined to overthrow the Government if they could, and they solaced themselves with Mr. Gibson's assurances that the state of Ireland did not require the renewal of the Crimes Act to protect the lives and liberties of Her Majesty's lieges.

Lord Randolph Churchill made a regular practice of preserving every letter he received. He made notes of many important interviews. Nothing that related to politics, whether creditable or not, whether important or petty, seems to have been excluded from his archives. Had any agreement been made with Mr. Parnell sufficiently definite or formal to be called a 'compact,' it is most unlikely that no written record would have been preserved. No scrap of paper referring directly or indirectly to this subject can, however, be traced. On the other hand, it is certain that he had more than one conversation with the Irish leader; that he stated to him his opinion of what a Conservative Government would do should it be formed; and that he declared that he considered himself precluded by public utterances from joining a Government which would at once renew the Crimes Act. No bargain could, in the nature of things, have been made. The chances of Lord Randolph joining a Conservative Administration were undetermined. The Conservative party would certainly not have ratified such a bargain. Lord Randolph Churchill could not presume to speak in their name; and even if their official leaders had bound themselves, their action might well have been repudiated by important sections of their

followers both in Parliament and in the country. 1885
'There was no compact or bargain of any kind,' Lord Randolph said to FitzGibbon a year later, 'but I told Parnell when he sat on that sofa [in Connaught Place] that if the Tories took office and I was a member of their Government, I would not consent to renew the Crimes Act. Parnell replied, "In that case, you will have the Irish vote at the Elections." ' ÆT. 36

So far as the vote in the House was concerned, the Nationalists wanted little temptation to turn out a Coercionist Liberal Administration. They had long been looking for an opportunity of revenge. They shared the general expectation that the lowering of the franchise would give a great advantage to the Liberal party. Their interest was clearly, and their intention was notoriously, to play for an equalisation in party strength by supporting the weaker side at the dissolution. If the Conservatives would give them any reasonable excuse for preferring them to the Liberal Government, if they would avoid studied causes of offence, the Irish party would be content to support them in the House and to throw their vote — so far as it could be thrown — for the Conservative candidates in the election. On some such tacit understanding as this Lord Salisbury's first Administration came into power and held sway. Neither party gave away any point of practical importance, or entered into any confidential relationship. Both Tories and Nationalists pursued their own ends. They used each other for their own purposes; and in the end the Conservatives came

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off the winners. All suggestions of a more definite compact belong to the regions of romance.

Within the space of a single year both great English parties were supported by the votes of the Irish members and were to some extent dependent on their good-will. But there was an important difference between the relations which respectively existed. The Conservatives, consciously or unconsciously, used the Irish party. The Liberals, willingly or unwillingly, were used by them. And whereas the former moved on through that association to prosperous years of power, the latter sank into paralysis and decay. But it should not be inferred from these unedifying reflections that Lord Randolph Churchill in his declarations against the re-enactment of the Crimes Act in 1885 was animated solely by a hard desire to effect a political combination. His views on Irish men and Irish matters were very different in character from the general opinion of his party. He knew Ireland well and liked her people. He had been in former days the friend of Mr. Butt. For five years of hard Parliamentary fighting he and his associates had sat in front of the Irish Nationalists, and many a reciprocal service or manœuvre had built up a House of Commons comradeship. 'You can always trust them,' he used to say, 'if you know them and understand them.' In office or Opposition, in good fortune or defeat, he detested the use of special legislation in Ireland; and, although he remained an unwavering opponent of Repeal, these pages will show that he at least did not approach Irish questions in a spirit of selfish opportunism.

Lord Randolph's votes and speeches during all the Coercion struggles of the Parliament were, moreover, upon record. The Irish members, on their part, knew that he had often supported them, to the detriment of his reputation among his own friends, while the most brilliant representatives of the Liberal Cabinet were scourging them without pity. They remembered that he had always been civil and friendly to them in days when scarcely any other English member would speak to them. They were attracted by his stormy, rebellious nature. They delighted in his attacks upon the Government. Parnell, we are told, liked him personally, though their acquaintance was scanty. Among prominent English politicians, he was at that time the best friend, and the only friend, Nationalist Ireland could find. Any Government in which he was powerful must be better than the Ministry from which Irish members had received so much ill-usage. It was upon the opinion they had formed of him during several years as a man, and upon their estimate of his influence with his party, and not on any compact or bargain, that they acted in 1885. 1885 Æt. 36

In some fashion or another, however, Cabinet and Administration had held together till the Whitsuntide holidays. The third period of the session is dangerous to Governments. Most of the measures of the year, and usually the Budget, are in the Committee stage and liable at any moment to be challenged by a vote. At the same time, when vigilance is most needed, a feeling of languor or

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exhaustion steals over the House of Commons. With the advent of hot weather weary members seek escape from London. Divisions are frequent; majorities precarious; an accident always possible. Rumours had, however, gained acceptance that Cabinet differences on Irish policy were not incapable of adjustment, and many Liberal members thought that for the session at least the danger of defeat was passed. But meanwhile a third and, as it proved, a fatal blow had been aimed against the Ministry. An amendment to the Budget had been framed at a meeting in Mr. Balfour's house in Carlton Gardens, at which Sir Michael Hicks-Beach, the Fourth Party, and Mr. Raikes alone were present. It was approved by Lord Salisbury and Sir Stafford Northcote and placed upon the paper in the name of Sir Michael Hicks-Beach. To a casual observer the amendment might have appeared unimportant. It condemned the proposed increase of the beer and spirit duties in the absence of a corresponding increase in the duties upon wine, and declined to add to the duty on real property without relief to the rates. But it was, in fact, artfully and deliberately contrived to unite the Opposition on an issue easily defensible in the country and likely to secure support from the Irish and from the liquor interest in the House. It acquired significance from a rumour that the Radical section of the Cabinet had severely criticised Mr. Childers's increase of the beer duties and wished to substitute therefor an additional duty on spirits.

The debate was not remarkable and until late in the evening neither in the House nor outside it was there any expectation of the actual result. But after the dinner-hour a feeling of apprehension seemed to pervade the air. When the division was about to be taken, the ranks of the Ministerialists were unusually thin. Suddenly it was realised that the result must be narrow. A thrill of excitement swept through the House. The doors were closed, and the counting proceeded. When the tellers advanced to the table it was seen that Lord Richard Grosvenor, the Government Whip, stood at the left instead of at the right of the line. For a moment the significance was not appreciated; then the Opposition burst into exultant cheering, renewed again and again. Four Liberals and 42 Irishmen had voted against Ministers: 74 Liberals were absent, mostly unpaired: the Government was defeated by 12. 1885 Æt. 36

It had come, after all. The mighty Government which had towered up august and formidable in 1880, which during five long years, in spite of disastrous enterprise and so many evil turns of fortune, had presented an unbroken front to all attacks, was overthrown at last. So often had good and careful plans miscarried; so often had skill, patience, and courage led only to disappointment that, although a dark curtain of perplexity obscured the future, this at least was triumph now. Lord Randolph had seen the shot strike home. The aim was shrewd and sure. His famous antagonist was down at last and he did not care, or was not able, to contain his joy. He

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jumped on his seat below the gangway and, waving his handkerchief, led the cheers of the astonished and delighted Conservative party. Well might they have cheered if they had only known that events would follow from that June division which should lead in direct and unbroken sequence to their long supremacy in the State; and, having regard to the repression and firmness which the next few days would require of Lord Randolph Churchill, his jubilation may be pardoned.

A threefold crisis now supervened: first, the national emergency, arising from grave affairs in Egypt and with Russia, and the political fermentation at home and in Ireland; secondly, a constitutional situation peculiar and unprecedented in character; and thirdly, the struggle within the Conservative party. All these operated simultaneously and sympathetically affected each other. The Liberal Administration was defeated on June 8. On the 9th Mr. Gladstone tendered his resignation to the Queen. The Queen expressed surprise that he should make his defeat a vital question and inquired whether, if Lord Salisbury were unwilling to form a Government, the Cabinet would remain. Mr. Gladstone replied that they would not remain. The Queen thereupon accepted the resignations, which were announced to Parliament on the 12th, and sent for Lord Salisbury. Anticipating, or having private notice of, the formal summons, Lord Salisbury had already approached Lord Randolph Churchill through Sir Michael Hicks-Beach:—

June 10, 1885.

My dear Lord Randolph, — Lord Salisbury has asked me to tell you that he would be very glad to talk to you on the general position, if you would call on him: and I very much hope that no such ideas as those which you seemed to entertain this afternoon will prevent you from doing so.

I feel convinced (though I am not authorised to give you more than my own belief) that he has asked *no one* to call on him, and that his reason for not doing so is that he thinks that to do so would be to usurp the position of leader, which no one has as yet conferred on him.

It would be simply ridiculous that this idea on his part, combined with your idea as to 'place-hunting,' should keep you two apart just now.

Yours sincerely,

MICHAEL HICKS-BEACH.

And the next day, on the eve of his departure to Balmoral, Lord Salisbury himself wrote: —

Confidential.

20 Arlington Street, S.W.: Thursday, June 11, 4.45.

My dear Churchill, — I have just received a communication which makes me anxious to see you. Could you call on me to-night after dinner, or to-morrow morning?

Yours very truly,

SALISBURY.

Lord Randolph thought it better to defer his visit until after Lord Salisbury had seen the Queen. His opinion had already been given as to the conditions under which it would be desirable for the Conservatives to take office, and was involved in the decision to try to turn out the Liberal Government by means of the Irish vote on the Beach Amendment. He had nothing new to say about that. If Lord Salisbury

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should decide not to undertake the commission, there would be no necessity to raise the thorny and painful questions connected with Sir Stafford Northcote.

In ordinary circumstances Lord Salisbury's course would have been simple. He would have advised a dissolution of Parliament. This solution was, however, impossible until November, owing to the Franchise and Seats Acts. Therefore his legal and constitutional right of recommending a dissolution was in abeyance; and, upon the other hand, the party of which he was the head would be compelled, if he took office, to carry the Budget, Supply, and other indispensable business of the year through a House of Commons in which they were in a minority of nearly 100. Lord Salisbury was so impressed by the difficulty of the situation that he went to Balmoral with the intention of declining to form a Government.

At Balmoral, however, the Queen persuaded him to make the attempt if Mr. Gladstone would not resume; and several attempts to induce Mr. Gladstone to resume having failed, Lord Salisbury accepted the duty and returned to London to discharge it. His first care was to seek from Mr. Gladstone an assurance of support in the measures absolutely necessary to bring the session to a close. The negotiations were protracted for many days; but eventually Mr. Gladstone agreed that facilities for expediting Supply might reasonably be provided, so long as the liberties of the House of Commons were not placed in abeyance; and he added the assurance

that there was no idea on the part of the Opposition of withholding the Ways and Means required for the public service. During this discussion Lord Salisbury addressed himself to the formation of a Government. He forthwith invited Sir Stafford Northcote to become Chancellor of the Exchequer and Leader of the House of Commons; and Sir Stafford Northcote agreed. He asked Sir Michael Hicks-Beach to be Colonial Secretary; and Sir Michael Hicks-Beach agreed. Lord Salisbury then applied to Lord Randolph Churchill, whom he desired to take the India Office. But Lord Randolph refused to join the Government if Sir Stafford Northcote continued to lead in the House of Commons. 1885 Æt. 36

From this position nothing could move him. He remained silent and stubborn. While Lord Salisbury was still undecided whether to go on without him or not, Sir Michael Hicks-Beach intervened. He was, in his own words, 'deeply impressed with the conviction that Lord Randolph Churchill's active assistance as a member of the Government was vital to any hope of Conservative success at the General Election, for his popularity with the new electorate was greater than that of any other member of the party';[1] and therefore, as soon as he learned that Lord Randolph had refused to join, he told Lord Salisbury — though without Lord Randolph's knowledge, and entirely without pre-arrangement of any kind — that in the altered circumstances he could not join either. The dead-lock was again complete.

[1] A note upon this chapter by Sir Michael Hicks-Beach.

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The narrative must here be somewhat interrupted, so far at least as chronology is concerned, to admit Lord Randolph Churchill's own account of his action. He left behind him a considerable memorandum from which I quote all that is relevant to this situation.

'In the events,' he wrote (as I should judge, early in 1889, though the paper is undated), 'which led to the formation of the Conservative Government in June 1885, I bore a part, and am induced to record my recollection of their nature; for one reason among others, that in my belief they were the main cause which led to the adoption by Mr. Gladstone of the policy of Repeal.

'In the spring of 1885 it was a matter of notoriety among well-informed and studious politicians that the question as to the expediency of the renewal by the Government then in power of the Irish Crimes Act — which was to expire in September[1] — was one on which the Cabinet could come to no agreement. In the speeches which I made in the month of May at the St. Stephen's Club and at Bow I endeavoured by diffuse examination of the question to do what I could to add to the difficulties which in connection with this subject embarrassed the Ministry.

'My remarks at the former place were followed by a decisive intimation from Mr. J. Morley that he would oppose any measure for the renewal of any portion of the Crimes Act. This intimation practi-

[1] August.

cally terminated the duration of Mr. Gladstone's Government. Agreement in the Cabinet on this question became impossible. The Ministers determined to court defeat in Parliament as a method of escape from the dilemma by resignation. A General Election was impending and the Opposition eagerly clutched at any opportunity of discrediting and defeating the Liberal party, and with this eagerness I was in thorough accord. Two attempts to place Ministers in a minority failed — one arising out of the events in the Soudan, the other out of a dispute concerning election expenses and local rates. A third attempt, against the Budget, met with unexpected success. The hostility of the licensed victuallers, who considered themselves aggrieved by Mr. Childers's financial proposals, and the almost admitted connivance of Lord Richard Grosvenor, then the Head Whip of the Liberal party, secured the absence from the division of some sixty or more members of the Ministerial forces. The Government was placed in a minority and resigned. 1885 Æt. 36

'The Opposition now found themselves in a position of immense difficulty, and though the difficulty had been foreseen by the leaders it was not on that account in any degree diminished.

'The difficulty was twofold: personal and political.

'1. For a long time there had been a division of opinion in the Conservative party on the question of the leadership — on the question as to whether Lord Salisbury or Sir Stafford Northcote ought to be the

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head of any Conservative Administration which events might bring into existence. While, on the one hand, there was a unanimous recognition by the party of the sterling worth and high character of the latter, there was, on the other, an equally unanimous but certainly not equally expressed opinion that he was indisposed by nature and training to place himself in entire harmony with the intense and acute party polemics of the moment; that he was, as he once admitted in a public speech, "deficient in go"; and that Lord Salisbury, though he was much less personally known to members of the House of Commons and much less popular than Sir Stafford, was more qualified for the conduct of a pitched battle such as we had to face.

'I had identified myself with this latter opinion, and had expressed it publicly and privately in one way and another since the year 1883. In that year I had committed myself to such an extent that my action was much resented by the party in the House of Commons, who adopted and presented to Sir Stafford an address expressing their full confidence in and great admiration of him. My belief is that in this controversy, the existence of which was notorious, the principals had no share; that Sir Stafford and Lord Salisbury behaved with the utmost loyalty to each other, and remained throughout on the most intimate and friendly terms.

'In June 1885, the crucial moment came. Mr. Gladstone resigned. "Whom would the Queen send for?" was a question in everyone's mouth. Lord

Salisbury was sent for. His intention was, if he formed a Government, that Sir Stafford should become Leader of the House of Commons. To this proposition, when proper opportunity offered, I declined to agree, adhering to my former opinions as to the indisposition of Sir Stafford for acute party warfare. Whether I was right or wrong I do not argue; public opinion in the party and outside was certainly not with me, and soon after, and since, I have been strongly drawn to the conclusion that I was in error. The fact remains for record: I declined to take office unless there was a change in the leadership of the party in the House of Commons. 1885 Æt. 36

'My conviction is that Lord Salisbury was most reluctant to attempt to form a Government. It was most distasteful to him to be brought into any conflict with Sir Stafford, to be preferred above him — thus shattering what had been Sir Stafford's great and honourable ambition. Finally, when it was demanded of him that he should put a slight upon Sir Stafford, and depose him from the leadership of the party in the House of Commons, Lord Salisbury almost determined to renounce the duty imposed upon him by the Sovereign. For days the matter was in suspense. Conversations, suggested arrangements, even intrigues were rife in the Carlton and in the Lobby. I have only a general and second-hand knowledge of what then went on. I kept entirely aloof, saw hardly anyone, and took no part in the controversy beyond what I had originally taken.

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Ultimately representations were made to Sir Stafford — how and by whom I do not know — which induced him to consent to accept the sinecure office of First Lord of the Treasury and a peerage with the title of Earl of Iddesleigh and Viscount St. Cyres. All I do know is that in these *pourparlers* Lord Ashbourne (then Mr. Gibson) was very busy and prominent and that he constantly and to many expressed his astonishment and displeasure that the susceptibilities or predilections attributed to Sir Stafford should form any obstacle to the formation of a Conservative Government. At that time Mr. Gibson exercised considerable influence with the Conservative party in the House of Commons.'

Lord Randolph seems to have overrated the importance of the part played in these negotiations by Mr. Gibson, though there is reason to believe that his influence was, so far as it was effective, exerted — and properly exerted — in the direction described. It is probable that Mr. Smith was the principal agent. Like other colleagues who sat beside him on the Bench, he knew, perhaps better than Sir Stafford Northcote's family, how often the progress of heart disease incapacitated the Leader of the Opposition from Parliamentary work, and sometimes even reduced him to a lethargic condition. Mr. Smith had recently taken Sir Stafford for a long cruise in his yacht, the *Pandora*, and had the best reasons for judging his true condition, as well as the best right to make representations to him about it. But to return to Lord Randolph.

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'The second part of the difficulty,' proceeds the memorandum, 'which confronted Lord Salisbury was political and arose entirely out of the question whether it was or was not essential and necessary to seek from Parliament a renewal of the expiring Irish Crimes Act. This question had been more than once discussed in small *conciliabules* before the fall of Mr. Gladstone's Government, and a sort of decision arrived at. I alluded publicly to the subject in a speech I made at Sheffield in the following September. But the former semi-decision did not help Lord Salisbury much when the actual crisis came. The whole question was again gone over with great care. Mr. Gibson in this difficulty was the real arbiter. He was the principal, and indeed the only, adviser to whom Lord Salisbury and his friends could have recourse for Irish information. In all the recurring debates on the state of Ireland and on the Irish land legislation which had marked the preceding sessions since 1880 he had been the real leader, and with him naturally it rested now to decide practically this grave and difficult question. I use the adjective "grave" because I believe that the decision not to attempt to renew the Crimes Act, more than any other event, finally determined Mr. Gladstone no longer to resist Repeal, and by some process or calculation not open to ordinary persons led Mr. Gladstone to the conclusion that there was a real working alliance arrived at between the Tories and the party of Mr. Parnell, the legitimate results of which would be proposals by the Tory Government

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in the nature of very large concessions to the Irish in the direction of Repeal.

'My own part in the matter was to express no opinion beyond what was contained in the following formula, from which I never departed, and which was accepted by Lord Salisbury and his friends: If it is decided that the state of Ireland is such as to require the further continuance of the Crimes Act, then the Conservative party cannot accept office, as the period of the session and the Parliamentary weakness of the party preclude the possibility of their passing through the House of Commons the necessary measure. If a contrary decision is arrived at — viz. that the Act may be allowed to expire — then the Conservative party might succeed the Liberal Government with safety and advantage. It was well known that personally I would not have taken office had it been thought necessary by a Conservative Government to attempt to renew the Crimes Act.

'Such was the nature of the difficulty which Lord Salisbury had to solve. I repeat my impression that he was most reluctant to form a Government. The personal difficulties alluded to above deterred him, and the recollections of Lord Derby's Ministries of 1852, 1858, and 1866 were heavily against an attempt to carry on the business of the country without the support of a majority in the House of Commons. The pressure, however, from the local organisations in the country was strong to cause him to undertake the unattractive duty, and the prevalent feeling of

the party in Parliament was in accord with this pressure. 1885 Æt. 36

'For the decision he ultimately arrived at I can claim little responsibility and in it I had little or no share. I had no prepossession one way or the other, unless it was that the precedent set by Mr. Disraeli in 1873 under similar circumstances, and the apparent results of Mr. Disraeli's action, were very vividly before my mind. I would have consented with equal cheerfulness to one decision or the other; nor do I believe that either decision would have affected numerically the results of the General Election which took place in November.

'Looking back on those events after January 1886, and after the resolution arrived at by Mr. Gladstone to introduce a measure for the Repeal of the Union, I came to the conclusion that in June 1885, we had been most unfortunately inspired. I can trace a clear connection of cause and effect between Lord Salisbury's accession to office in 1885 and Mr. Gladstone's new departure in 1886.'

For five days uncertainty and rumour were supreme. Lord Randolph maintained an unbroken reserve. Good friends who had knowledge of what was going forward pressed him hard. Those who cared about his career thought he was ruining himself. Even Sir Henry James, a political opponent, but a personal friend, was provoked to address him.

The letter is interesting for its frank recognition that 'Tory Democracy' was a faith of its own.

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Sir Henry James to Lord Randolph Churchill.

Temple: Saturday Morning.

My dear Friend, — I am so afraid that you are about to make a grave mistake, most injurious to your interests, that I *must* intrude my thoughts upon your breakfast.

I assume Salisbury 'accepts the commission'; of course he will offer you office. If there be any definite measure — say the Crimes Act — which he insists upon and you object to, you will be quite justified in refusing office. For you will have a justification which you can make public, and everyone will give you credit for having acted according to your principles and conscience. But if your reasons are indefinite — say, for instance, because you cannot obtain a declaration in favour of a Liberal Toryism — you will have no explanation to give which the public will ever be able to understand. Between this and November no policy can be carried into effect by legislation, and so it is scarcely possible that any difference existing between the Salisbury Tories and yourself could be brought to a practical issue. And so, if you now refuse office on theoretical grounds which you can never explain, you will obtain the credit amongst the whole Tory party of having plotted against Salisbury and of having prevented him and them from coming into office. It will be time enough for you to fight the battle of Tory Democracy when some action (by way of legislation or administration) is taken adverse to the principles you hold.

Surely you ought to be catholic *now*, and let all shades of Toryism enjoy a gleam of success. If you do not, you will much endanger the cause of 'Tory Democracy'; for although you can at any time be the leader of a Democracy, your power with the Tory element will be sadly shaken.

Ever yours,
H. J.

Men who presume to deal with great affairs must cultivate an unyielding disposition. It is easy to

withstand the reproaches or attacks of opponents; but the honest advice of a friend and well-wisher at once disinterested and experienced saps the foundations of judgment. There was one appeal which must have greatly disturbed Lord Randolph. Nothing in his private life was more striking and constant than his affection for his mother and his respect for her opinion. 'I have been thinking,' she wrote (June 14), 'very quietly and calmly over your position, and I think you might go to see Lord Salisbury before his meeting, to show him your friendly feeling while you maintain your own position. You see, in the winter you felt acutely he did not consult or notice you. He may say on this critical occasion he came to you before anyone else and offered you one of the highest places in his Cabinet, and you refused your assistance. Yesterday he sends his secretary to bid you to go to his meeting. This, from reasons, you are obliged to decline. But do you not think you owe him some explanation? . . . He told you to consider his offer; so that, it seems to me, you are almost in duty bound to go to see him; and if you simply refrain from going, he will think you decidedly hostile. There is no doubt he is in a very difficult position, and may say you require *not* any policy or special measure, but simply that he should *kill* an old friend whom *all* respect. . . . I do hope you may be guided rightly.'

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But Lord Randolph Churchill remained unresponsive. No communication of any kind passed

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between him and Lord Salisbury until the crisis was ended.

'At this time,' writes a Bencher of the Middle Temple, 'an event occurred which strangely evidenced the strength of Lord Randolph's popularity. But a description of the scene needs some explanation. Amongst the Inns of Court the Middle Temple is fortunate in the possession of a Hall grand in its construction and rich in evidence of associations extending over seven centuries. In this Hall, during Term time, the barristers and students dine. From amongst the barristers a governing body, called the Benchers, is selected. On the Grand Day of the summer Term the Benchers entertain distinguished guests at a sumptuous banquet held in the Hall. On these occasions Benchers and guests enter the Hall walking two and two, in procession, to the Daïs, upon which they dine. After the dinner is concluded, in like procession they leave the Hall, walking throughout its full length from the Bar to the door which leads to the Parliament Chamber.

'A Grand Day of the Middle Temple occurred on June 10, 1885. Never before or since has so remarkable a company gathered within that Hall.

'Nearly every Bencher was present, for fifty-five were there. Amongst them were the Prince of Wales and his eldest son, Prince Albert Victor, who on that day was called to the Bench. But many distinguished visitors were also present, for amongst the guests were the Archbishop of Canterbury, Prince Edward of Saxe-Weimar, Lord Derby, Lord Cran-

brook, Sir Stafford Northcote, Mr. John Bright and other leading politicians; and yet it seemed as if there was only one of whom the gathering was thinking — and he was Randolph Churchill. The first sign of the great interest was shown when the loving-cup was being handed round; for when it was placed in Lord Randolph's hands and he stood up to drink from it, the whole assemblage in the body of the Hall sprang to their feet and cheered him vociferously. No such demonstration had ever occurred in the Middle Temple Hall. And, again, when the dinner was concluded and the Benchers and their guests, walking two and two, proceeded to leave the Hall, a still more marked demonstration took place. The Royal Princes passed almost unheeded, whilst the Hall rang with shouts of "Randolph!" "Randolph!" "Churchill!" "Churchill!" No other name was uttered. It seemed as if all present wished to show that they regarded him — and him alone — as being the political victor of the hour.' 1885 ÆT. 36

Yet, in contrast with these signs of triumph, what inward misgivings darkened Lord Randolph Churchill's mind! In the presence of a trusted friend he dropped with relief his mask of unconcerned reserve and revealed himself plunged for a while in one of those fits of despondency which so often followed or preceded the crisis and action of his life. 'I am very near the end of my tether,' he said to this friend who met him at the Turf Club in these anxious days. 'In the last five years I have lived twenty. I have fought Society. I have fought

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Mr. Gladstone at the head of a great majority. I have fought the Front Opposition Bench. Now I am fighting Lord Salisbury. I have said I will not join the Government unless Northcote leaves the House of Commons. Lord Salisbury will never give way. I'm done.' To the remark that Lord Salisbury could not form a Ministry without him he answered drily, 'He can form a Ministry if necessary with waiters from the Carlton Club.' His companion on this proceeded amiably to suggest that if all was really over with the Conservative party, Liberalism offered a wide field for the activities of a Tory Democrat. 'Ah, no!' said Lord Randolph in utter pessimism, 'Chamberlain and the Birmingham Caucus will swallow you all. It is they who will govern the people of England for the future.' 'The working classes must have leaders.' 'Yes, but they will not want aristocrats.'

The whole country was agog about the political interregnum and busy in the fascinating employment of Cabinet-making. Two main opinions were focussed by the newspapers — one was for a Cabinet of 'old and tried public servants,' to maintain an orderly and decorous Government during the few months that must elapse before the election; the other for a 'Cabinet of Compromise,' which should include the Tory Democrats and secure their powerful aid in the coming fight. But meanwhile the business of the House of Commons was not wholly interrupted and a curious Parliamentary incident occurred. On the evening of the 15th Mr. Glad-

stone proposed to consider, before adjourning, the Lords' amendments to the Seats Bill. He moved accordingly; but on the question being put Sir Henry Wolff at once moved the adjournment of the debate. He pointed out that the Lords' amendments were matters of substance and importance — as, indeed, they were — and ought not to have been inserted by them into the Redistribution Bill. He declared that such matters could not be decided upon in the absence of a responsible Government or a responsible Opposition. Sir Charles Dilke replied on behalf of the Government that the insertion of these amendments in the Redistribution Bill had the approval of Lord Salisbury himself, and was, in fact, adopted to avoid inconvenient delay. Sir Stafford Northcote thought it right to confirm the statement that it had been agreed that the matter should be dealt with in the Redistribution Bill instead of by a separate Bill. But the Fourth Party were not inclined to change their minds on that account. Mr. Gorst argued against haste without good reason for haste. Lord Randolph also spoke sharply in favour of the adjournment. What were the leaders of the so-called constitutional party about that they should tolerate the transaction of important business connected with reform under prevailing conditions? He also accused the Government bluntly of having produced the difficulty by procuring defeat.

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Sir Michael Hicks-Beach then got up from the Front Opposition Bench and, to the astonishment of his colleagues on the Treasury Bench, spoke in

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favour of the adjournment and against his leader. In the division the Conservative party split into puzzled fragments, and persons who thought they might be Under-Secretaries — and in such circumstances they are a respectable body — suffered acutely. Thirty-five members voted with Sir Michael and Lord Randolph for the adjournment. Sir Henry Wolff and Mr. Gorst were their tellers. The rest, with Sir Stafford Northcote at their head, went into the Government lobby to support Mr. Gladstone. Sir Henry Wolff's colleague in the representation of Portsmouth was a venerable member of the orthodox Conservative party. As he passed the Front Opposition Bench on his way to vote with Lord Randolph Churchill, Sir Stafford Northcote said reproachfully: 'These are the times when one can tell one's friends.' 'At such a crisis,' replied the old gentleman ruefully, 'and with such an election before us, the representation of Portsmouth must be undivided.'

This was the end. Two days later it was formally announced that Sir Stafford Northcote would retire to the House of Lords and that Sir Michael Hicks-Beach would lead the House of Commons. It has been asserted that this division settled the struggle and that Lord Salisbury, confronted with this plain proof that Sir Stafford Northcote's leadership would not be accepted by a powerful and active section of his party, capitulated to Lord Randolph Churchill. This is not quite true. No doubt the division clinched the issues; but the personal negotiations which resulted in Sir Stafford's

elevation were already far advanced; and he himself notes in his diary of June 15: 'This has apparently been my last night in the House of Commons.' Indeed, there seems to have been less design in the affair than is commonly supposed. Few people — even among the most intelligent and informed — will believe how much in modern English politics is settled by the accident or caprice of the hour. Lord Randolph Churchill had often voted and spoken against the leader of the Opposition before. He thought the acquiescence in Mr. Gladstone's wishes on this occasion stupid, and he said so. He thought the House should adjourn without transacting business and he voted in that sense. Sir Michael Hicks-Beach was party to no plot. He did not enter the House until late and had not heard Sir Stafford's speech. He gathered from the debate that the Fourth Party and the 'Janissaries' were attacking the Government and he supported them on general principles. Not until he sat down did he learn what he had done. Moreover, before the division had taken place Lord Salisbury's hopes of a settlement were already so good that he had sent the following letter to Lord Randolph Churchill: — 1885 ÆT. 36

Private. 20 Arlington Street, S.W.: June 15, 1885.

My dear Churchill, — I was very sorry you were not able to come to our meeting this morning. The general sense of those present, with one or two exceptions, was that we could not well refuse to take office, after all that has happened this year, if the Government have finally determined not to resume it. Still I think everyone present recognised that in a party sense this obligation was a misfortune.

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Though I fear I must draw an unfavourable inference from your absence, I still venture to express a hope that you will allow me to put down your name for the Indian Secretaryship on the list which I must submit to the Queen on Wednesday.

I should be very glad to talk these matters over if you like to come and see me. I shall be in all the morning.

Yours very truly,

SALISBURY.

Lord Randolph replied as if nothing had happened: —

2 Connaught Place: June 16, 1885.

Dear Lord Salisbury, — I am deeply sensible of the extreme kindness towards myself which you show me by your letter received this morning, and if not inconvenient to you I will do myself the honour of waiting upon you about eleven o'clock to-day.

Believe me to be

Yours most sincerely,

RANDOLPH S. CHURCHILL.

That the interview was friendly and in the main satisfactory may be inferred from the following letter written later in the day, which shows, among other things, that in the hour of victory Lord Randolph Churchill was not inclined to desert those who had worked with him: —

2 Connaught Place: June 16, 1885.

Dear Lord Salisbury, — I do hope you will not be annoyed if I add to your many difficulties by these few lines. Of course, since I saw you this morning I have thought about little else than all that you were kind enough to say to me on many subjects. I do feel very uneasy indeed about Wolff and Gorst, and I cannot think that I have submitted to

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you their position as regards myself with the urgency which they are entitled to expect from me. If it were possible for you to consider whether it might not be in your power to recommend Wolff for the high dignity of a Privy Councillor I should be easy in my mind about him, and I venture to press this desire of mine upon you.

Gorst . . . knows his powers, his position in the House, his hitherto barely recognised claims, and it makes me perfectly wretched to feel that it must occur to his mind that his failure to obtain that for which so many persons of knowledge consider he is fitted in every way is due to lukewarmness on my part. If I did not know what the general feeling of the House of Commons will be as regards myself on this point, I would have hesitated to trouble you; but I am certain that if with respect to these two cases things remain in the position you gave me to understand this morning they would be, I shall be considered to have failed my friends, and my powers, whatever they may be, of being useful to your Government will be impaired.

Yours most sincerely,

Randolph S. Churchill.

Lord Salisbury, thus appealed to, consented to submit Mr. Gorst's name to the Queen for the office of Solicitor-General and Sir Henry Wolff's for a Privy Councillorship. When the lavish hand with which high appointments were distributed among persons who had borne no share in the battle is remembered, it cannot be said that these rewards were disproportioned to services or talent.

The difficulties within the Conservative party were now settled; but the delays in the formation of the Government and consequent uncertainty were prolonged in order to extract from Mr. Gladstone

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further assurances in regard to the passage of necessary public business while the Government were in a minority in the House of Commons; and meanwhile Lord Salisbury retreated to Hatfield. Of the interviews and negotiations incidental upon this, a complete account was afterwards given to Parliament; and on June 23 the acceptance of office by Lord Salisbury and the composition of the Ministry, the main features of which had become generally known, were formally announced, and the constitutional and party crisis came to an end.

'What a triumph!' wrote Mr. Chamberlain on June 18, when the issue became apparent. 'You have won all along the line. *Morituri te saluto.*' And with this an important chapter in Lord Randolph Churchill's life may be conveniently closed.

CHAPTER X

THE 'MINISTRY OF CARETAKERS'

'This is no man of system, then; he is only a man of instincts and insights. A man, nevertheless, who will glare fiercely on any object; and see through it, and conquer it; for he has intellect, he has will, force beyond other men. A man not with *logic-spectacles;* but with an *eye!*'—CARLYLE on Mirabeau, *French Revolution*, bk. iv. ch. iv.

THE first trials of a Prime Minister are often the most severe. The most formidable obstacles lie at the beginning. Once these have been surmounted, the path is comparatively smooth. Nearly all the rest of Lord Salisbury's life was spent at the head of the Government. In a period of seventeen years he filled for more than twelve the greatest office in the State. Four separate Administrations were formed under his hand. Responsibilities not less grave than those of 1885, far more important legislation, wide acquisitions of territory, vast decisions of peace and war attended their course. But, as with Mr. Pitt, the first two years of his service perhaps exceeded in personal stress all the years that were to follow. And it is probable that no part of those two years was more clouded with anxious perplexity than the autumn of 1885. His own position was not assured. Public confidence in his character and judgment had yet to

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be won; his authority within his party had yet to be consolidated. That party itself had struggled back to power, weak in numbers, nervously excited by its efforts, upon curious and compromising terms. It was torn by the very inspiration that revived its strength. It awaited in acute apprehension an imminent and momentous election, the result of which no man could foretell. Very different were those after-years, when the old statesman, towering above his colleagues in the Cabinet and commanding the implicit obedience of his followers, had gathered patiently together round the standards of Conservatism almost all the strongest forces in the country.

Yet while resources were still slender the difficulties and dangers of the situation were tremendous. The dispute with Russia about the Afghan boundary was in its most critical stage. For at least two months the Cabinet faced the chance of war with a formidable military Empire. The triumphant Mahdi was ravaging the Soudan, and Egypt, withdrawn behind her narrowest frontiers, was threatened without and utterly disorganised within. The British finances were oppressed by a deficit. Ireland smouldered. All the elements of Irish national life were banded together under the supreme authority of Parnell and that efficient Protestant rebel was methodically preparing his campaign for an Irish Parliament. In the English provinces Mr. Chamberlain, released from such partial restraint as official obligations had hitherto imposed, unfolded the 'Unauthorised Programme' to an exulting Radical democracy. And

behind all 'two million intelligent citizens,' newly enfranchised, impatiently awaited the opportunity of casting their votes. Such were the perils and embarrassments amid which the 'Ministry of Caretakers' came into being. Nor was it strange that eminent politicians were willing to prophesy that after a brief and inglorious career they would be 'swept off the face of the earth.' But Lord Salisbury, reminding the House of Lords that several of the longest Administrations in English history had come into being under precarious conditions, and fortifying himself by the examples and experiences of Mr. Pitt in 1784, of Lord Liverpool in 1812, and of Lord Palmerston in 1855, addressed himself to his heavy task with serene determination. 1885 Æt. 36

The Fourth Party was translated bodily to a higher sphere. Lord Randolph Churchill became Secretary of State for India — at that time, with the exception of the Foreign Office, the most anxious and important of all Ministerial posts. Mr. Balfour, though not admitted to the Cabinet, was appointed President of the Local Government Board. Sir Henry Wolff was despatched on a special mission to Turkey and Egypt with wide and peculiar authority over the whole field of Egyptian affairs. Mr. Gorst accepted the position of Solicitor-General. Three out of the four friends who had worked together more or less harmoniously in Opposition were sworn Privy Councillors upon the same cushion; and it was also noticed that an unusual proportion of the thirty-five members who had voted with the Fourth Party

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in the division upon Sir Henry Wolff's motion during the *interregnum* were included in the Government.

Lord Randolph's popularity was enhanced by his promotion. Those commanding qualities which the House of Commons had so frankly accepted, and Tory Democracy so loudly proclaimed, were now recognised by persons and by classes who had hitherto schooled themselves to regard him merely as an unedifying example of irresponsible audacity. The vigorous assertions of youth were stamped with the seal of official authority and over all hung the glitter of success. His friends, old and new, hastened to offer their congratulations. One of his acknowledgments may be recorded:—

June 25, 1885.

Dear Mr. Tabor, — I was so pleased to receive this morning your kind letter and I trust that your congratulations may be to some extent justified by results. As it is the fact that whatever of success I may have attained is mainly owing to the six years which I passed at Cheam, may I ask as a favour for a holiday for all those young gentlemen who are now deriving from you similar advantages to those which befell me? It would be a pleasure to me to know that I have not asked anything which was not in your power to grant.

Yours most sincerely,
Randolph S. Churchill.

Now that Lord Randolph had accepted 'an office of profit under the Crown' his seat at Woodstock was vacated and he had to submit himself to re-election. The leaders of the Liberal party did not encourage opposition to Ministers in such circumstances at this

juncture. When they had themselves forced upon the Conservative party the task of Administration, it seemed factious to impede the return of individuals necessary for that purpose. Moreover, they were sensible of the advantage which almost always accrues to anyone who is singled out for attack by the opposite side. But the personality of the candidate gave promise of distinction to his opponent, the nice balance of parties in the old Borough held out a hope of success, and Mr. Corrie Grant hurried down from London to voice the hot and not unreasonable resentment of the Radical rank and file. This gentleman appealed to the electors upon a single issue. It was not, he declared, a fight of politics against politics, or of principle against principle — it was a fight against a man. The statements and expressions which Lord Randolph had employed against the Liberal party, its leaders, and in particular Mr. Gladstone, made it necessary at all costs to challenge his return. 1885 Æt. 36

Because of the immense pressure of work at the India Office and also no doubt not to treat his opponent too seriously, Lord Randolph declared himself unable to take part in the contest personally and left his election entirely to his constituents and friends. He contented himself with a short address. Having never held office before, it was necessary for him to give double the time of more fortunate persons to acquiring knowledge of his duties. 'Under these circumstances it is impossible for me to leave London and to go among you as has been on former occasions

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my practice and my pleasure. But I console myself with the recollection that I am no stranger to any of you, that for nearly twelve years my public life has been before you, and that on no occasion had I any reason to imagine that I had forfeited your confidence or gone against your general political sentiments.' 'Whatever may be, in your opinion, the position I now occupy, that position you have made; it is mainly your work. And that position I am perfectly certain no stranger or carpet-bagger or any hirelings from the Birmingham Caucus will persuade you to damage or destroy.'

The campaign was opened immediately and with determination on both sides. Sir Henry Wolff, Lord Curzon, Sir Frederick Milner, Mr. St. John Brodrick,[1] a nephew of the former Liberal candidate, arrived in Woodstock to support Lord Randolph; and the Opposition was aided by a zealous contingent from Birmingham to such an extent that at the opening meeting Sir Henry Wolff described Mr. Corrie Grant as 'the delegate of Mr. Schnadhorst and Mr. Chamberlain.' This statement caused Mr. Chamberlain annoyance and he wrote at once to Lord Randolph disclaiming all responsibility for the contest and any desire to cause him trouble. Lord Randolph replied as follows:—

To Mr. Chamberlain.

July 1, 1885.

I think the mention of your name in Wolff's speech was either wrongly reported or else not in the least meant ill-naturedly. . . . In any case, no mischief is to be made by

[1] This was public-spirited. (See page 440.)

anyone between you and me as far as I am concerned. I was quite sure that you had nothing to do with the Woodstock contest, but even if you had, I never should have thought it anything else but perfectly fair and legitimate. In the meantime many thanks for your kind letter, which I much value. Don't be angry with Wolff. 1885 Æt. 36

There were, notwithstanding, several reasons for uneasiness as to the result. The absence of the candidate was an undoubted drawback. The propaganda of Mr. Joseph Arch had produced a considerable impression upon a section of the labourers. A more formidable consideration was the attitude of the Duke of Marlborough. Lord Randolph's father had wielded immense personal influence in the borough and had neglected nothing that might constitutionally be done to secure the return of his nominee. Two years before, the new Duke would no doubt have exerted himself to the utmost to help his brother; but the sale of the Blenheim pictures had produced a serious quarrel in the family. Lord Randolph had vehemently protested against the dispersal of so many of the treasures for which Blenheim had been famous and a complete estrangement had ensued. The Duke, moreover, after the opposition which had been threatened to his candidature for the Carlton, had relapsed into political independence. He now declared himself so strictly neutral during the contest that Lady Randolph and the friends who came down to fight the election for her husband, were fain for the first night of their arrival to shelter at the Bear Hotel. Sir Henry

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Wolff's diplomacy soon proved equal to those difficulties. Friendly relations were restored; Blenheim opened its gates to the Conservatives; and the Duke, stung by a statement in the press that he had himself been a party to Mr. Corrie Grant's candidature, finished by lending his carriages to convey Lord Randolph's supporters to the poll. The election was nevertheless fought under some disadvantage as compared with former occasions.

But the Secretary for India found in Lady Randolph and in his sister, Lady Curzon, a mainstay of support and enthusiasm. 'I should be very glad,' he wrote to his wife on June 29, 'if you could arrange to stay in Woodstock till Friday. If I win, you will have all the glory.' Driving about the widely extended constituency in a smart tandem profusely decorated with pink ribbons, well known to most and with a smile for all, these ladies canvassed indefatigably from morn till night. Their Primrose badges — still an object of amusement in high Tory circles — were the first to be worn in actual political warfare; and their influence, supplying as it did that personal element without which enthusiasm is scarcely ever excited, became a factor in the fight, against which the eloquence of two Liberal ladies from Girton — specially imported to meet the emergency — was utterly unable to prevail.

The result of the election was announced on the evening of July 3:—

Lord Randolph Churchill	532
Mr. Corrie Grant	405

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The majority for Lord Randolph Churchill was 127, or more than double that by which he had been returned in 1880. Needless to relate, the declaration of the poll was received with the utmost satisfaction by the crowd in front of the Bear Hotel, to whom Lady Randolph, Lord Curzon, Sir Henry Wolff, and later on Mr. Corrie Grant made brief but appropriate speeches; and the fact that over six hundred 'result messages' were despatched from the local post-office that evening showed the interest taken by the world at large in this the last of the Woodstock elections.

Even before Lord Randolph was re-elected for Woodstock, he was required in the House of Commons. Portentous extracts were read from his speeches as a private member, and his secretary in the House was cross-questioned about them. Did he still adhere to his charges against the Khedive? Were his views on Ireland what he had declared them to be at Edinburgh? To all such inquiries Lord Randolph sent a simple answer, which may be recommended to others similarly circumstanced: 'I neither withdraw nor apologise for anything that I have said at any time, believing as I do that anything which I may have said at any time was perfectly justified by the special circumstances of that time, and by the amount of information I may have had in my possession.'

The new Ministers met Parliament with general statements of their views and intentions on July 6. In both Houses they made a good appearance. They achieved at once the requisite pomposity of public

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utterance, and handled power as to the manner born. To the Peers Lord Salisbury declared that the pledges of any British Government were sacred, and that all existing obligations would be faithfully observed in the further conduct of the negotiations with the Court of Russia. In answer to the taunt, made out-of-doors, that the Conservatives would postpone the date of the election for the purpose of prolonging their enjoyment 'of what some persons are pleased to call the sweets of office,' he invited Lord Granville to admit that the new Government had endeavoured to amend the Redistribution Bill so as even to accelerate the dissolution. Lord Carnarvon justified the attempt to govern Ireland under the ordinary law by statistics which showed the diminution of agrarian crime. He spoke of former statesmen who had failed in Ireland — 'so many that the wrecks of them lie strewn about' — and he seemed to wrestle modestly, but hopefully, against the conviction that he himself would be added to the number. In the Commons Mr. Bradlaugh again presented himself and was received by the new Leader of the House with the usual resolutions of prohibition and exclusion, affirmed by the usual majorities. The next day Sir Michael Hicks-Beach explained the few uncontentious legislative projects which the Government would try to carry through and asked for the time of the House to enable them to wind up the business of the Session. Mr. Gladstone declared that the request was not unreasonable and that he would himself endeavour to

help the Ministry by his vote and by the example of his silence. Lord Randolph, in what is called 'a statesmanlike tone,' described the late Prime Minister's conduct as magnanimous and considerate; and a Radical motion of want of confidence in the new Administration finding only two supporters, the prevailing harmony remained unbroken. 1885 ÆT. 36

The position of the Government, faced by a large majority in nominal opposition, dependent upon Nationalist favour for the avoidance of defeat at any moment and on any question, mistrusted by many of their own friends, bitterly hated by Whigs and Radicals, and unable to escape from constant humiliation by resignation or dissolution, was one of extreme discomfort. But there seemed to be a kind of truce at Westminster, in vivid contrast to the rising strife elsewhere. Under such happy conditions, and with the cessation of Irish obstruction, the end of the Session proved curiously fruitful. The Budget was uncontroversial. The Government helped Lord Rosebery to carry his Secretary for Scotland Bill through both Houses. Lord Salisbury passed a measure dealing with the housing of the working classes, in spite of some murmurings among the Peers at its socialistic flavour. Mr. Balfour took charge of a Medical Relief Bill which ultimately became law, although the Liberal majority 'improved' it to such an extent that the Government disclaimed responsibility for it. Mutual concessions and genuine co-operation placed both a Land Bill and a Labourers Bill for Ireland upon the statute

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book. The Land Bill, or the 'Ashbourne Act,' as it was called, took extensive effect, and was the foundation and the precursor of all subsequent Land Purchase Acts, culminating in the Land Act of 1903. Sir William Harcourt and the new Home Secretary aided each other to effect most important amendments in the criminal law; and, finally, the Colonial Secretary, firmly refusing to allow the objections of New South Wales to defeat the wishes of the other Australian Colonies, succeeded in passing a Federation Bill which opened the door to a Commonwealth of Australia. Indeed, a Parliamentary Paradise, albeit enduring only upon sufferance, seemed to have sprung into being in the midst of a Political Inferno. The good sense and tolerance of the nation were gathered within the sheltering walls of Parliament, while discord, faction, and electioneering clamour reigned supreme outside.

One curious legislative feat must be recorded. An Irish Educational Endowments Bill had been brought down from the Lords and read a first time in the Commons early in the session (May 12) as one of Mr. Gladstone's Government Bills. It had been practically abandoned before the change of Ministry. Not one of the members of the new Government had read a line of it; but Lord Randolph — interested as ever in Irish education — was persuaded by FitzGibbon, in the early days of August, that the Bill might be so altered as to make a useful measure and he exerted himself to salve the derelict. The difficulties seemed insuperable. The Chief

Secretary for Ireland, Sir William Hart-Dyke, indignant at a proposal to introduce important legislation in the last week of the last session of an expiring Parliament, refused to have anything to do with it. The Leader of the House only consented to allow the attempt upon the condition that the session should not be prolonged by a single day. The Bill had to be redrafted from beginning to end. It could not be advanced a stage without the concurrence of the Nationalist party. Three or four perfectly distinct and usually antagonistic sections of Irish opinion had to be conciliated and the negotiations between Lord Randolph and FitzGibbon on the one hand, and Mr. Sexton and Mr. Healy on the other, afforded some beautiful specimens of Hibernian diplomacy. All obstacles were surmounted. The Irish Attorney-General, Mr. Holmes — with whom Lord Randolph had made friends — undertook the conduct of the redrafted Bill. It was read a second time on August 11. The amendments, covering whole pages of the order paper, entirely altering the Bill from its original shape, unintelligible to everyone except the Minister who moved them and the two or three Irish members who discussed them, were considered on the 12th. On the 13th the Bill was recommitted, to introduce the necessary money clauses, read a third time and sent to the House of Lords: and the next day, on which the session closed, it passed and received the Royal Assent. None of its thirty-eight sections have given rise to any difficulty and during the nine years which followed its passing it was

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constantly renewed until the endowments and management of upwards of 1,350 Primary Schools and more than 100 Intermediate and Collegiate Institutions had been reorganised under its operation.

Mr. Holmes, the Attorney-General, like many others who worked under Lord Randolph Churchill, became warmly attached to him. Their joint labours on this Bill impressed him with the extraordinary power of conciliating persons and overcoming difficulties possessed by a man so often associated only with violence. Above all he admired his courage. 'I feel,' he wrote two years afterwards, when the leader of Tory Democracy was leader no more, 'like one of Rupert's soldiers serving under a Dutch *Burgomaster*.'

One harsh note jarred upon the ears of these Elysian legislators. The new Ministers had scarcely taken office before the shadowy relations which existed between the Conservative Government and the Irish party issued in a substantial form. Nationalist opinion in Ireland had long been excited over one of those dark and curious police cases the savagely disputed details of which are thrust from time to time before the House of Commons, to the bewilderment of British members. In August of 1882 a whole family of the name of Joyce had, with the exception of one young boy, been murdered under circumstances of peculiar atrocity at Maamtrasna. Ten men were arrested upon the evidence of three witnesses who professed to have seen them enter the house in which the crime was committed. This evidence was confirmed by two

of the prisoners who turned approvers. After three successive trials three men were condemned to death and executed, and the remaining five, having pleaded guilty, received death sentences, afterwards commuted to penal servitude for life. So far the story was grimly simple. But it was now alleged that two of the murderers hanged had, in their dying depositions, declared the innocence of the third, Myles Joyce; while this man himself had protested always and to the last that he was not guilty. One of the informers next came forward and swore that he had been told by an official that his evidence would not be accepted by the Crown unless it applied to all the prisoners, that he was given twenty minutes to decide, and that then from 'terror of death' he had been induced to swear away the life of Myles Joyce. An appeal from the Archbishop of Tuam to the Lord-Lieutenant had led to an inquiry by Lord Spencer and this inquiry resulted in the conclusion that the verdict and sentence were right and just.

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Hatred of a Coercion Viceroy and the profound distrust which divided all who administered the law in Ireland from the mass of the people, magnified this squalid tragedy into a political issue of importance. It was asserted that as a result of Coercionist procedure and the overweening desire of the Government to secure convictions, not only had an innocent man been done to death, but that some of those still in prison had been wrongfully convicted. When the case was raised in Parliament during the

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Autumn Session of 1884, the Government, representing the vote as one of confidence or want of confidence in Lord Spencer, refused all further inquiry. In this they were generally supported by both great parties and the Irish motion was rejected by 219 to 48. But Lord Randolph Churchill, Sir Henry Wolff, and Mr. Gorst had voted in the minority with the Nationalists and Lord Randolph had spoken strongly in their favour.

Almost as soon as the formation of the new Cabinet was complete Mr. Parnell moved (July 17) a resolution reflecting on Lord Spencer and demanding a fresh inquiry. Sir Michael Hicks-Beach opposed this resolution in the name of the Government; but at the same time he said that it was the right of every prisoner at any time to appeal to the Lord-Lieutenant for the reconsideration of his sentence. 'The present Lord-Lieutenant [Lord Carnarvon has authorised me to state that, if memorials should be presented on behalf of those persons referred to in this motion, they will be considered by him with the same personal attention which he would feel bound to give to all cases, whether great or small, ordinary or exceptional, coming before him.' That was all; and it may not seem a very large concession to Irish national feeling, but it was enough to draw upon the head of the Minister a storm of reproach. Sir William Harcourt, undisturbed by the significant absence of Mr. Chamberlain and Sir Charles Dilke, rose to express the indignation of the Liberal party that law and order should be subverted to political

expediency and the decision of a Viceroy impugned. 1885
These sentiments were received with undisguised ÆT. 36
approval on the Conservative benches. Lord Randolph Churchill replied. So far as he was personally concerned his task would have been easy. He, at least, had consistently supported the Irish demand for an inquiry. He was to defend in office a smaller concession than he had urged in Opposition. But what with Ulster growlings, sympathetically echoed by the Tory party on the one hand, and on the other the plain need of Nationalist good-will, if peace and order were to be maintained in Ireland under the ordinary law, the path was not easy to find and perilously narrow to tread. His speech, in fact, resolved itself into a series of depreciatory comments upon Lord Spencer's administration. Sir William Harcourt had spoken of it with pride. 'We were proud of the administration of Lord Spencer.' Who did '*we*' include? It was the prerogative of royalty to speak in the plural number. Sir William Harcourt had once before electrified the country by claiming royal descent. Was it in that exalted character that he used the 'we,' or did he mean that the late Cabinet were united in their admiration of Lord Spencer's Viceroyalty? The division list would show. For himself he had had no confidence in the administration of Lord Spencer. For that reason he had a year before voted in favour of an inquiry into this particular case. The new Government ought not unnecessarily to go out of their way to assume responsibility for the acts of the

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late Administration. They would now pronounce no opinion upon the merits of the case. The new Lord-Lieutenant would inquire carefully and impartially into it; and pending that inquiry, having full confidence in Lord Carnarvon, Ministers would vote against the motion of Mr. Parnell which seemed to prejudge the issue. On this Mr. Parnell rose at once and said that he was content to await Lord Carnarvon's decision. He therefore asked leave to withdraw his motion. But the discussion did not terminate. The Ulster members and their friends — always so powerful in the Conservative party — were offended by the concession, small though it was, which had been made to their hereditary foes. The friendly tone of the Irish leader, and the Nationalist cheers with which Lord Randolph's strictures upon Lord Spencer had been received, excited Orange wrath and Tory disapproval. Liberals who had smarted under the taunt 'Kilmainham Treaty' were not slow to retort 'Maamtrasna Alliance.' Mr. Brodrick, a young Conservative who had not been included in the new Government as his talents deserved, and who believed, perhaps with reason, that his exclusion was due to the fact that he had voted with Sir Stafford Northcote and against Lord Randolph Churchill in the *interregnum* division, expressed with much force the Conservative discontent. He was supported by the vehement outcry of an Ulster member. Mr. Gorst, who now for the first time defended the Government as Solicitor-General, unwittingly fanned the flames by

allowing himself to use the candid but unfortunate expression 'reactionary Ulster members.' The stern reproaches with which Lord Hartington closed the debate, were endorsed by many Conservatives in the House and by an influential section of the party press. 1885 Æt. 36

The Maamtrasna incident was a factor in great events. It profoundly disturbed the Conservative party. It thrust the Whigs for a space back upon Mr. Gladstone. It prepared Mr. Gladstone's mind for the reception of other impressions which were to reach him later. Upon Lord Spencer its influence was perhaps decisive; and the Viceroy who for three years had ruled Ireland with dignity and courage, yet with despotic power, whose name had become a synonym for the maintenance of law and order by drastic measures, finding the standard of Coercion abandoned even by Tory Ministers, came by one wide yet not irrational sweep to the conclusion that Home Rule in some form or other was not to be prevented. There can be no doubt that he was deeply wounded by Lord Randolph Churchill's speech. Connected though they were by many ties of kinship, their friendly relations were not for several years repaired and were never perfectly restored.

Heavy censures have been laid upon Lord Randolph Churchill for his share in this affair. The Maamtrasna inquiry has often been described as part of the purchase price paid by the Conservative party to Irish Nationalism for power. On this a word may

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be said. Although no bargain of any kind existed, it is obvious that Lord Salisbury's Government — which had come into office upon Nationalist votes, which was forced to govern Ireland by the ordinary law, and which possessed no majority in the House of Commons — was dependent largely upon Nationalist good-will. To preserve that good-will was vital to their power to bring the necessary work of the expiring Parliament to a creditable conclusion and to the success of their struggle with Mr. Gladstone. Many other issues of domestic and Imperial politics, far greater in their importance than Irish affairs, were at stake in the approaching election. The times were tempestuous; the need was great; the concession pitifully small. In the event, Lord Carnarvon received, considered, and in due course rejected the memorials which were sent him. No decision was reversed; no prisoners were released; but the Irish people, satisfied that the inquiry had been fair, accepted its conclusions. It would not be difficult, from another point of view, to justify on its merits an examination into the administration of justice in an island which for five years had lain in the grip of what was almost martial law, where the most elementary civil rights had been in abeyance and where nearly every safeguard of British judicial procedure had been destroyed — more especially when that examination was demanded by recognised representatives from a Government of which they were in a sense constituents. This is, however, to raise questions beyond the scope

of these pages. The merits of the Maamtrasna inquiry will be variously appraised. Lord Salisbury's first Administration must collectively share the responsibility, as they shared the advantage. But, whether right or wrong, Lord Randolph Churchill's personal sincerity cannot be doubted by anyone who reads his consistent declarations upon this and kindred Irish subjects or who studies his life and opinions as a whole. 1885 Æt. 36

The feeling excited among the Ulster members and so largely shared by orthodox unbending Conservatives was not concealed. The *Standard* abused the Tory leaders in the Commons as vigorously as any Liberal newspaper. Lord Randolph Churchill had promised to attend a great meeting at Liverpool at which Conservative working men from all parts of Lancashire were to present him with a great number of addresses. July 29 was fixed for the ceremony. On the afternoon of the 28th he learned that Lord Claud Hamilton, one of his old opponents in the National Union fight, and another local member declined to attend. Regarding this as a deliberate insult to the Government and to himself, he telegraphed at once to the Chairman of the meeting:—

Telegram from Lord Randolph Churchill to A. B. Forwood, Esq.

Lord Claud Hamilton has just informed me that he and Mr. Whitley do not intend to be present at the meeting to-morrow, assigning as their reason that they disapprove so strongly of the policy of the Government on Irish questions that, if they were present, they would be obliged

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to express publicly their disapproval. Under these circumstances I distinctly decline to attend a meeting of the Tory party in Liverpool at which the two senior members refuse to be present. I think it in the highest degree ungenerous and unpatriotic that two gentlemen professing Tory principles should show at a difficult and critical time such a deporable want of confidence in a Government which, in all other parts of the United Kingdom, has received from its friends a hearty and cordial sympathy.

From this determination the most frantic appeals from Liverpool failed to move him, and the meeting was abandoned at the last moment, to the great disappointment and inconvenience of all concerned. The Lancashire Tories were not, however, to be discouraged from their purpose and resolutions were immediately passed by the Liverpool Conservative Association inviting Lord Randolph to another similar meeting a few weeks later and urging the local members to attend.

The relations of Ministers with the Irish party which were thought so improper by good Conservatives, and were certainly compromising, did not end with the Maamtrasna inquiry. The appointment of Lord Carnarvon as Viceroy had been a part of the general policy of concession to Irish feeling which the new Government was forced to adopt. His opinions were known to be sympathetic to Irish aspirations and he was for that reason agreeable to the Nationalist party. That he had carried Federation in Canada, had tried to carry it in South Africa, and was well known to be familiar with the machinery of subordinate legislatures and Colonial Parliaments,

were facts not in those days devoid of significance. His first speech, in the House of Lords, as Lord-Lieutenant had been a declaration of the abandonment of Coercion and an appeal, in terms of generous sincerity, for a kindlier feeling between the two countries. Beginning thus, Lord Carnarvon was soon treading that path of hope and peril which seems to possess an almost irresistible fascination for English statesmen who are invited to watch at close quarters the detailed workings of Irish administration. 1885 Æt. 36

Lord Randolph Churchill was always inclined to blame Lord Ashbourne for his absence from Ireland at this critical time. 'The Irish Chancellor's constant presence in Dublin,' he wrote in 1889 in the memorandum already quoted, 'might have been of inestimable service to the Viceroy and the Government. . . . Lord Carnarvon, a nobleman of broad sympathies, liberal mind, and warm imagination, was left alone, without any previous knowledge of the country, to survey Ireland, to realise its condition, to appreciate the difficulties of its government, under the influence and guidance of Sir Robert Hamilton, at that time permanent Under-Secretary, who was possessed of great ability and long experience of the Civil Service, and who had some time previously arrived at the conclusion that the concession of Home Rule in some shape or other was inevitable. There was no countervailing influence of knowledge and authority with the Viceroy such as Lord Ashbourne might have afforded and Lord Carnarvon glided gently into the heresy which so grievously

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embarrassed and damaged his colleagues and correspondingly strengthened the party of Repeal.'

At the end of July Lord Carnarvon's opinions were so far advanced that he sought an interview with Mr. Parnell. The famous 'empty house' meeting was arranged. In a drawing-room in Grosvenor Square, dismantled and deserted at the end of the London season, the representative of the Queen in Ireland and the executive head of the Irish Government met the man whom the mass of the English people, high and low, had been taught during five years, by the leaders of both political parties, to regard as guilty at least of high treason and probably of complicity in murder. From the accounts which have since been made public, the conversation that ensued seems to have been interesting and agreeable. Lord Carnarvon carefully explained that he spoke for no one but himself, that he sought for information only, and that as the Queen's servant he could listen to nothing inconsistent with the Union of the two countries. After this formality had been assented to by Mr. Parnell, the two rulers of Ireland — coroneted impotence and uncrowned power — rambled discursively over such topics as self-government and national aspirations, Colonial Parliaments and a central legislative body which might, it appeared, possess — a remarkable licence — the right of protecting Irish industries. Altogether a very instructive afternoon!

When Lord Carnarvon first explained this incident in the House of Lords (June 10, 1886) he stated

emphatically that he had had no communication with the Cabinet on the subject either before or after the interview took place and that he had received 'no authorisation' from the Cabinet. Not until two years more had passed (May 3, 1888) did he reveal the fact that he had acted throughout with Lord Salisbury's consent. 'I should have been wanting in my duty if I had failed to inform my noble friend at the head of the Government of my intention of holding that meeting with Mr. Parnell, and still more should I have failed in my duty, if I had not acquainted him with what had passed between us at the interview, at the earliest possible moment. Accordingly, both by writing and by words, I gave the noble Marquess as careful and as accurate a statement as possible of what had occurred within twenty-four hours after the meeting and my noble friend was good enough to say that I had conducted that conversation with perfect discretion.' [1] 1885 Æt. 36

Lord Salisbury, however, kept this matter entirely to himself. No one of his colleagues, not even the Leader of the House of Commons, was made aware of the incident until the fact was declared in Parliament. Lord Randolph Churchill was subsequently both astonished and offended at this concealment of such an important political event from Cabinet Ministers by the head of the Government.

The fact that Lord Carnarvon met Mr. Parnell and, with the knowledge and assent of the Prime Minister, discussed at large with him projects of Home

[1] House of Lords, May 3, 1888. *Hansard*, 325, 1179.

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Rule, has been held by many people to prove that the Tory Cabinet was considering such a policy in the autumn. But, as Lord Salisbury never apprised his colleagues of this interview, the inference is obviously incorrect. No Home Rule proposals were ever submitted to the Cabinet of 1885. Had proposals of this kind been submitted, taking the form of the establishment of a Parliament in Ireland, the Cabinet would inevitably have rejected them. If Lord Salisbury had been a convinced Home Ruler he could not have imposed his view upon his colleagues. Principle, prejudice, obstinacy, conviction, would each and all together have paralysed him. Apart from the Irish Viceroy, the two Ministers who might have been expected — according to prevailing impressions and suspicions — to give the most favourable consideration to such proposals were Lord Randolph Churchill and Sir Michael Hicks-Beach. It is certain that both Lord Randolph and Sir Michael Hicks-Beach would have resigned rather than support such proposals, still less be responsible for their conduct through the House of Commons; and in resigning they would have been followed by the great majority of their colleagues. If these two leading Ministers had agreed with Lord Salisbury upon a plan, the Cabinet would have broken in pieces; and even if the entire Cabinet had agreed, it is by no means likely that they would have succeeded in carrying the Conservative party with them.

What ground is there for believing that Lord Salisbury was ever inclined towards Home Rule, or

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contemplated, even in the vaguest terms, making proposals to the Cabinet? No one knew better than he the character of his party and the disposition of his Government. His method had always been to obtain and use power only *through* the party and *by* the party and no English statesman in the nineteenth century was less likely to split his party or to lead some forlorn, uncalculated crusade of enthusiasm or adventure. Certainly, if any idea had crossed his mind of making a settlement on Nationalist lines with Mr. Parnell, Lord Randolph Churchill would have been the Minister he would earliest have approached. Lord Salisbury was on intimate terms with Lord Randolph. They communicated with the greatest freedom and fulness almost every day and almost always by letter. In all the extensive correspondence that remains no trace can be discovered which suggests even remotely the existence or the recognition of such an idea. The Prime Minister's letters to Lord Randolph, so far as they relate to Ireland, proceed on the fundamental assumption that they are leagued together to resist Home Rule. They speak of the 'onslaught that is impending.' They examine the resources with which it can be met. But that either or both could join the attacking forces is a suggestion in itself so widely improbable, of such inherent absurdity and unimagined remoteness, that it is not even mentioned for the purpose of being dismissed. The same may be said generally of the correspondence of the 1885 Cabinet of which Lord Randolph's archives contain an extensive store.

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Why, then, did Lord Salisbury allow and authorise the Irish Viceroy to confer with Mr. Parnell? It is not for me to attribute motives to persons with whom this story is only indirectly connected; but the question cannot be avoided and certain interpretations of his action irresistibly obtrude themselves. It seems, in the first place, a reasonable assumption that Lord Salisbury allowed the Viceroy to meet Mr. Parnell because the Viceroy was anxious for such a meeting and because Lord Salisbury did not think that such a meeting would do any harm. If the officer responsible for the Government of Ireland thought that his task would be made easier by private consultation with any particular Irishman, why should the head of an Administration avowedly pursuing a conciliatory policy to Irish Nationalism and earnestly endeavouring to preserve order without a special Act, refuse to allow such consultation? Lord Carnarvon was warned to make it perfectly clear that he was acting for himself and by himself, that the communications were from his lips alone, that the conversation was with reference to information only, that no agreement or understanding — however shadowy — was in question, and that the Viceroy must neither hear nor say a word that was inconsistent with the union of the two countries. Lord Carnarvon always asserted that he had made these conditions perfectly clear. Mr. Parnell did not in all respects concur. He declared that he did not recollect that these conditions were made. The conflict of evidence was direct. Even if it were admitted that

Lord Carnarvon failed to convey fully to Mr. Parnell these important preliminaries to their discussion, the fact that he honestly tried to do so to the best of his ability and believed that he had in fact done so, relieves him from any imputation of intentional bad faith as regards Mr. Parnell and clears *à fortiori* the Prime Minister — a person more remote from the transaction. But if Mr. Parnell chose to place upon Lord Carnarvon's words a construction which they would not bear or to attach to them an authority which they did not possess; if he chose deliberately, or through natural inclination, to magnify the importance of the whole incident, to treat it as a formal negotiation of a treaty, was Lord Salisbury to blame for that? And if Mr. Parnell thought fit for his own purposes to convey a detailed and highly-coloured account of his interview to Mr. Gladstone and other Liberal leaders, was Lord Salisbury responsible for that? And if Mr. Gladstone jumped at conclusions upon insufficient and questionable evidence, was Lord Salisbury responsible for that? Could he foresee these possible consequences of the permission he had given to Lord Carnarvon? Ought he to have foreseen them; and if he had foreseen them, ought he to have refused to allow the meeting to take place? These are questions which it is difficult to answer here. A sufficient explanation is that Lord Salisbury allowed the interview to take place in order to pacify the Viceroy and soothe Mr. Parnell and that he did not communicate the fact to his colleagues because he thought the matter would make more trouble in the

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Cabinet than it was worth. Mr. Parnell's biographer has explained with ingenuous candour the delicate and elaborate manœuvres in which his hero was at this time engaged. 'The course of the Irish leader,' he tells us, 'was perfectly clear. He had to threaten Mr. Chamberlain with Lord Randolph Churchill, and Mr. Gladstone with both, letting the whole world know meanwhile that his weight would ultimately be thrown in the scale that went down upon the side of Ireland.' Tactics like these, though perfectly legitimate for a public object earnestly cherished, are not of a character to entitle those who adopt them to any special consideration.

The session had no sooner ended than the campaign in the country began. The Liberal party went down to the General Election of 1885 in a spirit of comfortable over-confidence. Their leaders occupied themselves more in correcting each other than in assailing the Conservative Government. Indeed, it would seem that in the fulness of their power, with all the prestige of the 'Old Man' and the 'old cause' and the expected reinforcement of 'two million intelligent citizens,' they believed sincerely that the future lay exclusively in their hands and that the only questions of real importance were those which divided the ranks of the predominant party. Of these questions, however, there seemed to be no lack. Mr. Chamberlain's views upon Local Government, free education, graduated taxation and, above all, upon the transfer, tenure, and compulsory acquisition of land, set forth in a series of remarkable

addresses, soon drew him into a lively controversy with Lord Hartington and Mr. Goschen. Speech for speech they followed him about the country, until in the end he declared that he would accept office in no Government which 'deliberately excluded' the reforms he had advocated — in other words, in no Government of which they were members. Next came the question of Disestablishment, raised by stern Liberals, who found phrases about 'the old cause' and 'the old ship' soothing rather than satisfying in point of precision and substance. It was supported positively, as it appeared, by 374 Liberal candidates, and eagerly snatched at as a bone of contention by Wales and by English and Scotch Dissenters on the one hand and by Tory Churchmen and — let it be added — Tory politicians, on the other. In the last week of August Mr. Parnell demanded a national Parliament for Ireland. The whole press, Metropolitan and provincial, Liberal and Conservative, denounced his claim as destructive and impossible. 'There was no sign,' said the *Manchester Guardian*, 'of any appreciable section of Englishmen who would not unhesitatingly condemn or punish any party or any public man who attempted to walk in the path traced by Mr. Parnell.' Lord Hartington and Mr. Chamberlain — differing so widely on all else — representing as they did the extreme limits of Whig and Radical opinion, rivalled each other in terms of prompt, explicit, and unqualified condemnation. Ministers were silent. Lord Randolph Churchill, speaking at

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Sheffield a few days later, ranged over many subjects, dwelt long upon the state of Ireland and the decision not to renew the Crimes Act, but made no reference of any kind to Home Rule.

Upon all these grave matters Mr. Gladstone was called to pronounce; and, like other party leaders under similar circumstances, he exerted himself rather to find a common basis of agreement between followers who fundamentally disagreed than to point a path of his own. He would apparently go as far with Mr. Chamberlain in domestic reform as he could carry Lord Hartington. Disestablishment, he observed cautiously, was a gigantic question, 'and I am very far from saying that if I were twenty years younger, and circumstances were ripe for taking a matter of this kind in hand — either on the one side or the other — I should urge you not to give it the first place in your thoughts and actions.' Upon Ireland and the future he was majestically mysterious and uttered stately phrases about the supremacy of the Crown, the unity of the Empire, and the authority of Parliament, mingled with aspirations towards 'an equitable settlement' and 'another effort to complete a reconciling work.' Mr. Gladstone's utterances were officially declared to have united the Liberal party and, fortified by this assurance, all its sections resumed their warfare with ever-increasing turbulence, amid a babel of conflicting voices.

From this clamour and darkness the lines of battle slowly but surely ranged themselves much as Lord Randolph Churchill had expected and desired. The

menace to the Established Church and to denominational teaching consolidated the Conservative party. It provided a new and perfectly unimpeachable bond of union between them and the Irish Nationalists. The cry of the 'Church in danger' rendered Lord Salisbury very tractable on all other questions. To preserve that sacred vessel, to him precious beyond all else in English life, there was scarcely any concession he was not prepared to make — no merchandise he would not jettison. At Newport (October 7) he showed in unmistakable language that he was ready to make common cause with Tory Democrats, though they were Radicals at heart, and with Irish Nationalists, who were rebels by profession, thereby the better to resist the onslaught of secularism and atheism. Viewed in this light, boycotting seemed to him a very small matter, probably intangible to the law, depending 'on the passing humour of the population,' 'more like the excommunication or interdict of the Middle Ages than anything we know now'; and in fine his Conservative principles made shift to accommodate themselves to a political programme which was morosely admitted by friends and foes alike to be little less than the Gladstonian manifesto. 1885 ÆT. 36

The Irish vote came over solid and unstinted into the Tory lines upon a Parnellite denunciation of Mr. Gladstone and all his works, which in tone and language might have been an extract from one of Lord Randolph's speeches. 'In 1880,' ran this document,[1] 'the Liberal party promised peace, and

[1] Issued November 21, 1880.

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it afterwards made unjust wars; economy, and its Budget reached the highest point yet attained; justice to aspiring nationalities, and it mercilessly crushed the national movement in Egypt under Arabi Pasha. To Ireland more than to any other country it bound itself by most solemn pledges. It denounced Coercion, and it practised a system of Coercion more brutal than that of any previous Administration, Liberal or Tory.'

Among the millions who at the General Election of 1885 exercised, many of them for the first time, the proud privilege of the franchise, no human being could have explained with any approach to accuracy what a vote for either of the great parties in the State actually involved, whether in principle or action. Leaders on both sides, swept to and fro by turbulent cross-currents, took refuge in ambiguous obscurity, even where the most fiercely contested questions were concerned. Official Liberalism had no decided opinion about Disestablishment, nor Toryism about Fair Trade. Every politician had his own ideas about a social programme; and Ireland was a riddle at which neither party cared to guess in the absence of the electoral returns. What a mockery of statesmen's leadership and foresight the future was to unveil! The Parnellite manifesto and the Irish vote weakened, perhaps fatally, the Liberals who a few months later were to stake their fortunes upon Home Rule. Sir William Harcourt, who derided the Conservative party for 'stewing in Parnellite juice,' was himself to stew in that juice

for the rest of his life. Lord Salisbury, whose philosophic defence of boycotting had excited general consternation, stood on the threshold of a Coercion Bill and 'twenty years of resolute government.' Mr. Gladstone, appealing for a majority independent of Irish members, became evermore dependent upon them. Mr. Chamberlain was soon to fight for political existence side by side with that same Lord Hartington whom he now described as Rip Van Winkle, to sit for years in the same Cabinet as the Mr. Goschen he now ran up and down the land to denounce, and to be driven from the Liberal party, locked in fast alliance with the very Whigs he was now striving in the name of Radicalism to expel. Whether Lord Randolph Churchill surpassed these standards of consistency the reader will be able to judge as the account proceeds. 1885 Æt. 36

These were perhaps the busiest days of his life, and the amount of work of the most exhausting character which he contrived to discharge astonished all who knew him. Besides the anxious and incessant attention which the India Office required, and the ordinary labours of a Cabinet Minister, he had to watch the Irish situation and to prosecute his Birmingham candidature from week to week. In addition to all this he darted to and fro about the country — to Dorsetshire, Sheffield, Worcester, Lynn, Manchester — commending the Conservative cause to the electors in speeches in which serious argument was garnished with a vigour of metaphor and a raciness of language that delighted the Tory Democracy and attracted

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universal attention. Lord Salisbury, who knew what the management of the India Office at this time involved, seems to have been genuinely concerned lest his lieutenant should break himself down by attempting a platform campaign as well as his departmental work. 'The strain of doing the two things together,' he wrote (September 13) in a letter almost paternal in the kindness of its tone, 'is enormous: and if you once go a step too far — if you once break the spring — you may take years to get over it.' But Lord Randolph persevered; and though he was forced by ill-health to take a few weeks' rest at the end of September, he managed to carry out nearly all the engagements he had undertaken.

Such brief leisure as he could secure he spent mainly salmon-fishing in the Carron at Auchnashellach — a house and river in Scotland then the property of his brother-in-law, Lord Wimborne. Thither also went Sir Frederick Roberts before leaving to take up the Indian command. Lord Randolph was delighted to renew a friendship so happily begun the year before at Rewah.[1]

To his Wife.

Auchnashellach: September 27.

I have written twenty-one letters to-day, some of them long ones, so you won't be vexed if I only send a short scrawl. I think your letter to Lady Dufferin admirable and all your plans with regard to her Fund most excellent. I am sure Moore will do anything you want. I should advise you to get hold of Mr. Buckle and fascinate him, and make him write you up. I have been very glad to get Sir

[1] See Lord Randolph's Letters from India, Appendix.

Frederick Roberts here, and have had long conversations with him on many Indian subjects. Did you not find him very nice? It has been everything for me getting him up here. I never could have had any real satisfactory *pow-wow* in London. He is coming to dine with me on October 6, to meet some of the other Ministers — only a man party. I hope the new cook will be on his mettle. . . . 1885 Æt. 36

He found time to pay a flying visit to Howth — thus combining pleasure with certain matters of importance which drew him to Dublin.

Lord Randolph Churchill to Lord Justice FitzGibbon.

Auchnashellach, Dingwall, N.B.: September 21, 1885.

A line to tell you that on Tuesday, 29th inst., I commence my journey to Howth. A considerable business. I shall go by Carlisle to Holyhead, and imagine I ought to arrive at Kingstown on Thursday morning. From there I shall proceed to the Attorney-General's abode at Monkstown, and later in the day move on in the direction of 'the Eye.'[1] Will you keep me for two nights? I have asked the Lord-Lieutenant to let me go to him on the Saturday. Can you possibly manage to put up my secretary, Cecil Wolff? He is here with me and, while we are exploring the bay and deluding the wily lobster, will decipher telegrams and look after papers — a work I am perfectly unequal to. I hope the 'Tutissimus'[2] will be on the spot and David Plunket — also I shall have to go and see O. V. G. L.,[3] who wrote to me from Buxton the other day; and there are many other old friends I am greatly looking forward to seeing again — you first.

Auchnashellach, Dingwall, N.B.: September 27, 1885.

Many thanks for your letter and telegram. My complete physical restoration absolutely depends upon an evening with Father James Healy.

[1] 'Ireland's Eye.' [2] Lord Ashbourne.
[3] Our Very Good Lord: Ex-Chancellor Ball.

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I shall try to get to you early Saturday morning, and I fear I must leave Monday night, as our great Prime Minister has summoned a Cabinet for Tuesday. I shall go to the Attorney-General's on Thursday morning in order to get myself into a proper state of mind and body before meeting the Lord-Lieutenant. Could you not run out to Monkstown in the early morning, in order that we may deliberate as to the proper employment of Saturday and Sunday and Monday, and also that I may hear at first hand from authentic sources what the FitzGibbon Commission (Endowed Schools) has been up to. I see you have made a lot of jobbing appointments. Wolff is very pleased with your kind letter.

Can't you get O. V. G. L. over to Howth on Sunday? This would be better than any amount of Church.

Please tell Baillie Gage privately that an intelligent telegraph clerk at Howth while I am there would be a great advantage. The cypher telegrams require care, or else are worse than useless. They come pretty thick now.

The Irish capital under Lord Carnarvon was disturbed by many whisperings of Parnellite intrigue, Maamtrasna alliances, Catholic Universities and Repeal. What if they had known of the conversation in Grosvenor Square? Lord Randolph's sudden arrival in Dublin created a new flutter. It had been very freely said that he had committed himself to the Parnellites on Home Rule, and his visit was attributed in some newspapers to the purpose of further negotiation. He soon reassured his Irish friends. At the Vice-Regal he had a long conversation with Lord Carnarvon. The Viceroy made no mention of his communications with Parnell; but his language excited Lord Randolph's suspicions. He called upon Mr. Holmes, the Attorney-General,

early one morning, as he had proposed. They talked much on Irish politics. At length Lord Randolph got up to go. As he reached the door he paused, and, pointing with his finger, said, almost harshly and in a tone of command: 'Now, mind. None of us must have anything to do with Home Rule in any shape or form.' For the rest of his visit he amused himself at Howth, playing whist, chaffing his old friends, and catching lobsters in the bay. The cypher telegrams came in thickly. The short holiday was soon at an end. 1885 Æt. 36

Election oratory is not illuminating. The tags, the personalities, the arguments which spring into being in the excitement of the moment, may pass muster in the scrimmage. It were a harsh measure to call them forth one by one in cold blood to justify themselves before austere tribunals of taste and truth. The passions of these stormy months drew Lord Randolph Churchill into a dispute with Lord Hartington very soon to be regretted by both. It was natural that Whigs and Tory Democrats should eye each other with mutual dislike. The Whigs saw with jealousy the hold which the Tory party were gaining upon popular sympathies; with disgust their readiness to outbid old-fashioned Liberalism in all that appealed to the new democracy; and with alarm the excesses to which their own Radicals were encouraged or goaded thereby. The Tory Democrat, on the other hand, was incensed to see the ægis of aristocracy and wealth and all the solid assurance of respectability spread, however reluctantly, in protection

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over levelling and revolutionary doctrines. Both exerted influences upon their respective parties — the one of restraint, the other of propulsion — contrary to the general tendency of those parties. It needed but a step from these considerations for each to regard the other as insincere. The Whig accused the Tory Democrat of unscrupulous opportunism; the Tory said that the Whig was a humbug.

The actual dispute arose in this wise. Lord Hartington's examination of Mr. Chamberlain's programme led him to utter many sentiments about the rights of property which were not less gratifying to the Conservative party than his blunt repudiation of Mr. Parnell and Home Rule. 'If,' said Lord Randolph Churchill at Sheffield, after reading one of Lord Hartington's speeches, 'this is really all you can bring yourself to utter on political questions, you cannot indicate any difference between yourself and your friends and the Government now in power. If, on the contrary, you are compelled by the honesty of your nature to indicate the strongest possible difference with a certain section of the Liberal party with whom for years you have hopelessly and vainly tried to agree, then I say you have no longer the right as a patriot and a citizen to oppose the Conservative Government simply on the ground of antiquated names; nor the right to act with Mr. Chamberlain and his friends, who would not only destroy the Constitution, but would destroy with it that great party of the Revolution — the Whigs — under whose guidance that noble Constitution was

framed. . . . I say to Lord Hartington before you all — not by any backstairs intrigue, not by any secret negotiations, but in the face of this meeting and before all England — to Lord Hartington, to his friends, and to his following, words which were said to men nearly two thousand years ago, who were destined to become great political guides, "Come over and help us."' 1885 Æt. 36

This invitation was rejected by Lord Hartington with some asperity. It was comically suggested that he had written to inquire 'Who's "us"?' and had received the answer '"Us" is me.' Radicals earnestly besought him to follow the advice which had been offered. He would be much happier in the Conservative camp. It would be better for all parties if he took the plunge. To a proud man profoundly attached to historic Liberalism, painfully conscious of the increasing difficulties of his position, these taunts were galling in the extreme. In more than one speech he denounced the New Conservatives, of whom he said that they arrogated to themselves the title of Tory Democracy, had no distinctly marked political opinions, and looked on politics only as a game by which they might attain office. One shaft at least was shrewdly aimed. He taunted Lord Randolph Churchill with going about the country with 'a great policy of grand pretensions but absolutely no legislation.'

The Secretary of State for India spoke in Manchester on November 6. It was the eve of the poll. The election fever was at its height. The streets

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leading to the St. James's Hall were impassable, through the crowd waiting to catch a glimpse of their favourite.[1] The vast hall itself was crammed with excited people. Lord Randolph was in his element. He cast away every kind of restraint and devoted himself for an hour and a half with zeal and relish to an unmeasured attack upon the Whigs, their record, their leaders, their influence, and their aims. He showed how Lord Hartington had opposed almost every reform that the Liberal party had ultimately carried — the ballot, household suffrage, the abolition of flogging in the army — and yet under pressure had in the end consented to them all; how he was still professedly opposed to manhood suffrage and Disestablishment, but how in the near future he would be forced to support them; how he already advocated that extension of Local Government to Ireland which only the year before he had denounced. This was political principle! And now? 'Did any of you ever go,' inquired the speaker, 'to the Zoological Gardens? If you go there on some particular day in the week you may have the good fortune to observe the feeding of the boa-constrictor, which is supplied with a great fat duck or a rabbit. If you are lucky and patient and if the boa-constrictor is hungry, you may be able to trace the progress of the duck or the rabbit down his throat and all along the convolutions of his body. Just in the same way, by metaphor and analogy, the British public can trace the digestion and the deglutition

[1] *Times.*

by the Marquess of Hartington of the various morsels of the Chamberlain programme which from time to time are handed to him; and the only difference between the boa-constrictor and the Marquess of Hartington is this — that the boa-constrictor enjoys his food and thrives on it and Lord Hartington loathes his food and it makes him sick. . . .' 'Ah! the Whigs hate the New Conservatism and the Tory Democracy because they are democratic and because they are popular. They hate the Tory Democracy because it has cut the ground from under their feet; because Tory Democracy has taken the place of the Whigs and swept away that baffling and confusing medley party which at every crisis obscures the issues before the people. No; I quite admit that there is nothing democratic about the Whig. He is essentially a cold and selfish aristocrat who believes that the British Empire was erected by Providence and exists for no other purpose than to keep in power a few Whig families, and who thinks that our toiling and struggling millions of labourers and artisans are struggling and toiling for no other purpose than to maintain in splendour, opulence, and power the Cavendishes and the Russells.'

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The audience were delighted at this hard hitting. Certainly Lord Randolph had set his mark upon the Whig leader in unmistakable fashion. It is said by some who were present and who followed his movements closely, that on no occasion in Lancashire, not excepting the celebrated 'Chips' speech at Blackpool in 1884, was his command from minute

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to minute of a meeting containing a large proportion of opponents so strikingly displayed. Lord Hartington was deeply and personally offended. 'I hear,' wrote Lord Randolph to his wife a few days later, 'that Hartington says he will never speak to me again. *Je m'en moque.*' But 'never' is a hard word in political strife.

The contest in Birmingham was watched with the keenest interest all over the country. The fame of Mr. Bright, the popularity of his young challenger, the antagonisms which Mr. Chamberlain and his doctrines had excited, the daring of the assault upon the stronghold of Radicalism, the incidents of the Aston Riots, still fresh in the public mind, united so many picturesque and personal elements that the rough and tumble of a modern election assumed the glamour of a Homeric combat. Even Mr. Balfour seems to have become enthusiastic. Considering how intimate his relations with Lord Randolph must have been during these years, it is curious how few of his letters are to be found among Lord Randolph's extensive correspondence. But the Birmingham election drew from him a warm private message of encouragement and congratulation, written in his own hand, in the midst of his own fight in Manchester. Every word uttered by Lord Randolph was diligently reported. Not merely the regular speeches in the Town Hall with which the campaign was opened, but accounts of every petty ward meeting were telegraphed verbatim to the newspapers. Lord Randolph's address[1] had been issued as early as

[1] Appendix I.

October 10. From October 24 till the poll a month later he prosecuted his candidature with seemingly inexhaustible vigour and fertility; and as the days slipped by the tide of popular approval seemed to flow ever more strongly in his favour. At the Radical headquarters there had been at first some disposition to treat the attack with indulgent and superior contempt. But soon feelings of incredulous anxiety broke in upon complacency, and Mr. Schnadhorst and his myrmidons bent again over their finished — 'perhaps too highly finished,' as Lord Randolph suggested — organisation, ciphering their pledged electors out again by wards and streets and alleys with all that American thoroughness for which the Caucus was remarkable. The progress of the fight, strangely enough, provoked no personal ill-feeling between Lord Randolph and Mr. Chamberlain. Their renewed friendship continued unimpaired. They exchanged various small civilities and avoided, so far as possible, attacking each other in irritating terms. When, for instance, Mr. Chamberlain described Lord Randolph's address as 'colourless' and the reporters wrote 'scurrilous,' Mr. Chamberlain at once telegraphed to explain the mistake and added a friendly inquiry about Lord Randolph's health. For the rest, the contest in all the seven divisions was bitter and fierce. Lord Randolph was helped from morn till night by his wife and his mother, at the head of their Primrose Dames. These ladies canvassed the whole of the Central Division street by street and house by house; and the Duchess of

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Marlborough — who was, as these pages perhaps suggest, a woman of remarkable character and capacity — visited the factories and addressed the workmen effectively on her son's behalf. If it were in human power to command success, the Central Division of Birmingham would have been won. Against any other candidate Lord Randolph must have prevailed. But the personal loyalty of the people to their famous representative resisted all efforts. 'I like your husband,' said an old fellow to Lady Randolph on one of her canvassing tours, 'and I like what he says; but I can't throw off John Bright like an old coat.'

Not until the very eve of the General Election did the Liberal party realise that their victory in England and Scotland would not be complete and was even doubtful. For the first time since the Conservatives had taken office in June all talk of triumphant and crushing Gladstonian majorities died away. Tales of distress came in on every hand from the boroughs. Crowds of ardent Conservative working men — utterly unexpected phenomena — assembled to cheer and support the Government candidates. The Conservative party was found, moreover, to have gained vastly in prestige by its short tenure of power. Lord Salisbury's conduct of foreign affairs extorted admiration even from his opponents. The Afghan difficulty had been removed and the Russian crisis was at an end. The Egyptian settlement was proceeding smoothly. Good relations had been restored between Great Britain and the two Empires of Germany and Turkey, from which under the late

Government she had been estranged. The charges of 'rashness' and 'Jingoism' which it had been so fashionable to make against Lord Salisbury found their answer in actual events. The new Ministers had shown themselves competent and capable men. It was no longer denied that the Conservative party could produce an efficient alternative to any Government Mr. Gladstone might form. 1885 Æt. 36

The voting began on November 23. Forty-four borough constituencies which had been represented in the late Parliament by 35 Liberals and 20 Conservatives now (after redistribution) returned 26 Conservatives and 18 Liberals. Liverpool elected 8 Conservatives and 1 Parnellite (Mr. T. P. O'Connor); Manchester 5 Conservatives to 1 Liberal; Leeds and Sheffield 3 Conservatives each to 2 Liberals. Other large towns like Stockport, Blackburn, Oldham, Staleybridge, Bolton, Brighton, hitherto for the most part strictly Liberal, were now represented mainly or wholly by Conservatives. London, which in 1880 had sent up 14 Liberals and 8 Conservatives, now returned 62 Members, of whom 36 were Conservatives and 26 Liberals. Wherever the influence of Lord Randolph Churchill upon the Tory Democracy had been the strongest, that is to say, in the great centres of population and of active political thought, victory — all the more dazzling because so desperately won — rested with the constitutional cause. Two ex-Cabinet Ministers and quite a litter of underlings from the late Government fell before the storm. Whereas, in 1880, 287 English borough members had mustered

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only 85 Conservatives; in 1885, 226 English borough members numbered 116 Conservatives to 106 Liberals, 3 Independents, and 1 Parnellite. And it was, moreover, noticed that even in boroughs where the Tories were outnumbered the increase in their vote was heavy and almost universal.

Yet it is remarkable that, amid so many successes, the Conservative party should have derived enormous encouragement from a defeat. The result of the Birmingham election was declared late on the night of the 24th. Seven Liberals or Radicals were returned for its seven divisions. But the Conservative minorities were everywhere largely increased, and raised in the aggregate from 15,000 voters to 23,000. Whereas in 1880 the proportion of Liberals to Tories in Birmingham was as 2 to 1, it was in 1885 as 3 to 2. Mr. Alderman Kenrick, the Chairman of the National Liberal Federation, saved his seat by scarcely 600 votes from Mr. Matthews. In the Central Division Lord Randolph Churchill was defeated by Mr. Bright by 4,989 votes to 4,216, a majority of less than 800. It was claimed by Conservative, and generally admitted by Liberal, writers that no more significant proof of the change of opinion in English cities could be furnished than this result. But while the political world was fully aware of the meaning of the Birmingham elections, the Tories who had fought the battle with so much earnestness and enthusiasm were bitterly disappointed. Hope, growing stronger, had even ripened into confidence as the contest had proceeded,

and the crowd of local leaders in the Midland Conservative Club awaited the declaration of the poll in intense excitement. As one by one the adverse results came in, the hum of eager conversation died away and gloom overspread every face. The figures of the Central Division were still delayed. 'Churchill's in!' shouted a voice from the street; and a frantic cheer went up. 'At the bottom!' cried the mocker; and fled. Then the truth arrived. There was a sickly silence. In a moment Lord Randolph was upon his feet. 'Gentlemen,' he said, 'the man who cannot stand a knock-down blow isn't worth a damn.' The Midland Conservative Club were accustomed to regard this remark with a respect which they did not always extend to more edifying political pronouncements. 1885 Æt. 36

Lord Randolph returned to London next day and was almost immediately elected by a majority of more than 2 to 1 for South Paddington, where he then lived. The Fourth Party had fought everywhere in the front line. Mr. Balfour, forsaking the shelter of Hertford, had captured an immense working-class constituency in Manchester. Mr. Gorst was returned again for Chatham. Only Sir Henry Wolff — still far away in Egypt — fell at Portsmouth, and passes as a Parliamentary politician out of this story altogether. Tory confidence flared high during the first few days of the election and 'Back to 1874' was everywhere the word. Lord Justice FitzGibbon was in London when the returns from the boroughs were coming in, and after spending the small hours among an excited

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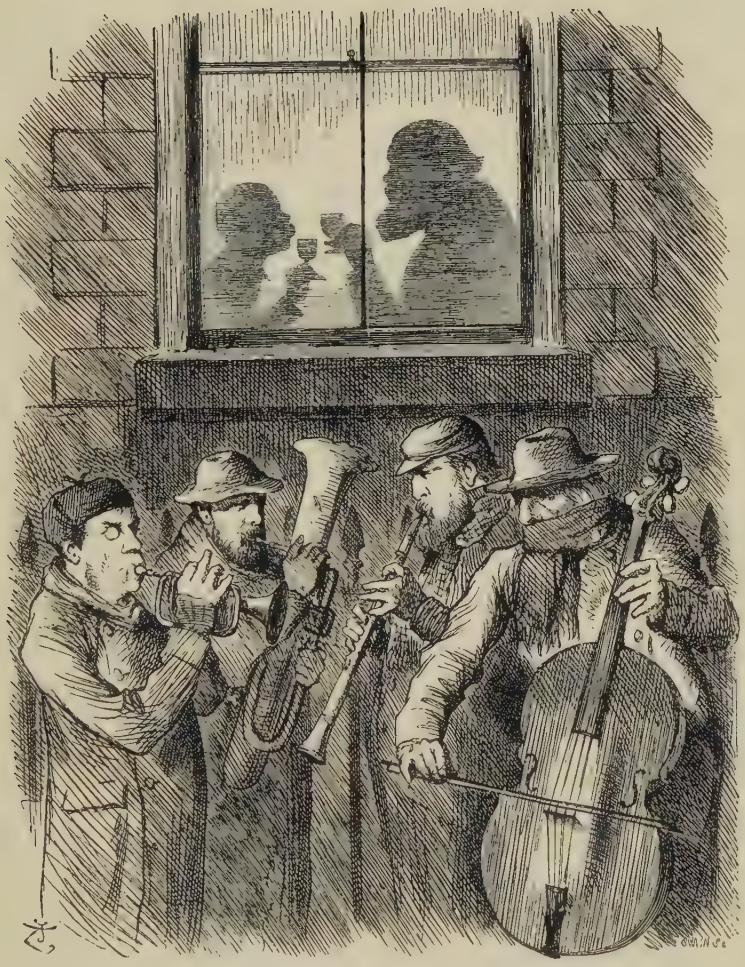
crowd at the tape machine in the Grand Hotel, he hurried round to Connaught Place to see his now famous friend. 'Ah!' said Lord Randolph, pacing up and down in excited satisfaction, 'the Whigs can no longer call us the party of the classes. If they do, I'll chuck big cities at their heads.'

But after the boroughs, the counties. While Liberals all over the country were beginning to lose heart, while whispers of utter defeat and panic were flying about among the wire-pullers, Mr. Gladstone stoutly proclaimed his undiminished confidence that the new voters would reverse the decision of the old; and so it proved. Scotland voted solidly Liberal — only nine Conservatives being returned. In the English counties the agricultural labourers tramped doggedly to vote down the farmers' and landlords' candidates. Mr. Farrer Ecroyd's Fair Trade movement, which had proved so popular in Lancashire towns, exerted an opposite effect in villages, where Corn Law memories were still wakeful. Mr. Chamberlain's speeches had fallen upon a fertile soil. The country party, with all its immense territorial influence and candidates of county families, was shattered, never to be restored, except as a shadow of its old strength. Henceforth the Conservative leaders, if they were to rule the land, must build in town and country upon the foundation of democracy.

Ireland was a portent. Not a single Liberal was returned. The Irish Whigs were as a party and a force totally exterminated. Ulster elected 16 Tory members and 17 Nationalists. Out of 89 contests



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THE WAITS.

Punch, December 26, 1885.

Mr. Parnell won 85, the greater part by overwhelming majorities. Upon such national authority could he base his demand for Home Rule. The leaders of both the great English parties understood the meaning of the Irish elections. On November 30 Mr. Gladstone was still appealing to his counties for a clear and strong majority over the combined forces of Conservatives and Parnellites. 'There seems to be still hope,' wrote Lord Salisbury to Lord Randolph Churchill, as late as December 3, 'that we may be above low-water mark — *i.e.* Tories + Parnellites = Liberals.' The hopes of both were falsified by the event. The final result of the General Election of 1885 sent to the House of Commons 335 Liberals, 249 Conservatives, and 86 Parnellites. 'Low-water mark' it was. 1885 Æt. 36

'What will happen now?' Lord Randolph was asked by a friend. 'I shall lead the Opposition for five years. Then I shall be Prime Minister for five years. Then I shall die.' In respect to the span of his life the words came true almost to the day. But his personal fortunes and the destinies of Britain were about to receive a vast and unanticipated twist.

CHAPTER XI

AT THE INDIA OFFICE

ἀρχὴ ἄνδρα δείξει.
'Great command proves the man.'

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The reader, having persevered so long amid the intrigues of party and the warfare of Parliament, may now be glad to escape for a while into the calm atmosphere of a public department. The India Office rejoices in a character and constitution of its own. The cost of its maintenance and the salaries of its officials, from the Secretary of State downwards, are defrayed by India and do not appear upon the votes of the House of Commons. The opportunities of debating the policy or conduct of the responsible Minister, except upon formal votes of censure, are therefore perhaps inconveniently few. Any apparent laxity of control by Parliament is, however, corrected by the Council of India — a body consisting of gentlemen of long and distinguished service in the East — with whom the Secretary of State is by law compelled to act and by whose decisions he is in many matters of the highest importance absolutely bound. Under these restrictions the Minister brings the opinion of his colleagues and of Parliament and his own personal

influence to bear upon the majestic organisation of the Government of India. 1885 Æt. 36

Modern conditions increasingly enhance the power of the political chief over all officials, military and civil. If the Secretary of State is possessed of sufficient personal authority to enforce his will upon the Cabinet, no hierarchy, however glittering, no Constitution, however venerable, can withstand him. He has it in his power to change the hierarchy and to remould the Constitution till the implement is convenient to his hand; and his decisions will in almost every case be acclaimed by the party press and ratified by driving a party majority through the division lobbies of the House of Commons. But to employ methods so costly and even ruinous, in their violence, is in itself usually a confession of failure on the part of the Minister. His business is to exert his authority by modes of persuasion, patience, and adjustment which may secure in the end the triumph of his opinions without the sensible abasement of others.

The Council of India is for all such purposes an invaluable instrument to a wise Secretary of State. Having in subordination to him officers as great and independent as the Governor of nearly three hundred million persons and perhaps as intractable as a Commander-in-Chief at the head of nearly three hundred thousand soldiers, he should naturally fortify himself with the unique authority of his Council, now in his dealings with the Cabinet and now with the Viceroy. At the time at which Lord Randolph became

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Secretary of State the Council of India consisted of fifteen men, nearly all of whom had spent their lives, whether as soldiers or as civilians, in India; nearly all were old or elderly men, and many of them were men of very high distinction and reputation. In these circumstances it was not an easy task for a Secretary of State thirty-six years of age and absolutely devoid of all official experience, to preside over their meetings and to bring to bear on them the personal influence which, for the proper conduct of business, should be exercised by the responsible head of the office. Lord Randolph himself, after his first experience of a meeting of Council, said to a friend that he had felt 'like an Eton boy presiding at a meeting of the Masters.'

'Yet it is probable,' writes Sir Arthur Godley (who was then, as now, Under-Secretary of State for India) in a memorandum for which I am much indebted to him, 'that no Secretary of State ever showed greater skill and address in the discharge of this part of his duties. His treatment of it was characteristic and in a degree peculiar to himself. For some time and until he had mastered the methods of procedure and the idiosyncrasies of the individual members, he took no part whatever in the debates, but sat in his Presidential chair absolutely silent. As soon, however, as he began to feel at home, he adopted a method to which he strictly adhered as long as he was at the India Office. Having gone carefully through the list of agenda, he would decide some days beforehand which were the subjects as to

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which he desired to use his influence. He would then send for the papers on these subjects and would study them most thoroughly. Then, when the day of meeting arrived, having thus mastered his brief, and possessing the immense advantages of his natural readiness, his powers of speech and his Parliamentary training, he would intervene with decisive effect, and rarely, if ever, failed to carry his point. The other subjects — those which he had deliberately left unstudied — he never touched, relying entirely upon those members of Council who were specially qualified to deal with them. He treated his Council with great consideration and with marked politeness; but he nevertheless spoke always with confidence and decision and occasionally with a touch of vehemence and of "the personal note" which, though natural enough in the House of Commons, came as a slight surprise in the serener regions of the India Council room.'

Railway construction was one of the first subjects which commanded his personal attention. The opinion had been for some time gaining ground in the Railway Department that the necessary development of Indian lines could only be attained if private enterprise were enlisted to supplement the efforts of the State. Bargains between public departments and limited companies are subject to such severe scrutiny in Parliament that hitherto the India Office had not ventured to offer sufficient inducement to attract commercial interests. Lord Randolph Churchill had, however, no fear of the House of Commons

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and always believed in his power to persuade them to any reasonable proposal. The construction of the Indian Midland and Bengal-Nagpur Railways had been recommended as famine-protective lines by a select committee which sat in 1884. Under his hand both projects moved forward at once. The stimulus of a four per cent. guarantee on capital, together with one-fourth of the amount by which the net receipts might exceed the guarantee, led to the formation of the Indian Midland Railway Company in July 1885. The railway was 589 miles in length; it connected the Great Indian Peninsula with the East Indian Railway system by continuous broad-gauge lines, opened out a populous and fertile country, and shortened the distance by rail from Bombay to Cawnpore by 134 miles. The Bengal-Nagpur Railway, though, owing to financial considerations, not actually floated till 1887, was eventually founded on the same conditions. The transfer of the Mysore State Railway to the Southern Mahratta Railway Company for extension and working was another important railway scheme arranged while Lord Randolph was in office.

Nothing pleased the officials of the India Office more in their new chief than his total freedom from anything like humbug. On one occasion the Finance Committee were to deal with the question, then so vital to India, between bimetallism on the one hand, and a gold standard on the other. Before going into the committee he said to the Permanent Under-Secretary, who happened to be in his room: 'I've asked Arthur Balfour to come across and sit with us at this

Committee: he knows all about bimetallism, but I'm as ignorant about these things as a calf.' Accordingly Mr. Balfour came and a very interesting discussion took place, at the end of which Lord Randolph (though he probably had not greatly exaggerated his own previous ignorance) delivered an admirable summing-up, worthy of an experienced Chancellor of the Exchequer. 1885 ÆT. 36

'He was, in fact,' Sir Arthur Godley continues, 'an excellent head of a great department. He occupied himself instinctively and naturally with the great questions and kept his work upon a high plane, leaving petty matters to his subordinates, but always maintaining his own ultimate control. He was, as everyone knows, exceedingly able, quick, and clear-sighted. Besides this, he was very industrious, very energetic and decided when once his mind was made up and remarkably skilful in the art of devolution — that is to say, in the art of getting the full amount of help out of his subordinates. He had the gift of knowing at once whether a given question was worth his attention or should be left to others. If he took it up, he made himself completely master of it; if he left it alone, he put entire confidence in those to whom he left it, endorsed their opinions without hesitation, and was always ready to defend them or to further their wishes. This quality, it is needless to say, was invaluable both to himself and to those who worked with him. His perfect candour and straightforwardness were not only admirable in themselves but were

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a great assistance to business. What he said, he meant; and if he did not know a subject he did not pretend to know it. Few high officials can ever have been his superior, or indeed his equal, in the magical art of *getting things done*. Those who worked under him were sure of a friendly and favourable hearing and they felt that, if they had once convinced him that a certain step ought to be taken, it infallibly would be taken and "put through."'

Lord Randolph enjoyed his official work greatly, and made no secret of it. His tenure of the post was brief but it would be safe to say that there was not a single individual among those who had worked with him who was not sorry to lose him. He, on his side, was extremely sorry to go, and freely said so. Just before Christmas, when it was known that the Government would be turned out as soon as Parliament met, he was talking to one of his Under Secretaries and said: 'I suppose you are going away for a holiday?' 'Yes,' was the reply; 'I am going away for a week; what holiday are you going to take?' 'I shall take none,' he said; and then, with the air of one who is making a confession, 'The fact is, you know, it is all very well for you: but I'm new to office: I enjoy it thoroughly; and I'm going to be kicked out very soon. So I mean to stay here and get as much of it as I can.'

Lord Salisbury in after-years distinguished as perhaps Lord Randolph Churchill's greatest quality his power of commanding the personal devotion of his subordinates. In coming to the India Office the

new Minister was lucky in finding available as his Private Secretary a remarkable man, who rendered invaluable service to him, to the India Office, and (it is hardly too much to say) to the two Governments of which Lord Randolph was a member. Mr. A. W. Moore had come at an early age to the India Office as a clerk, with no special reputation for industry or ability, and, being placed in the Finance Department, was soon regarded as a somewhat idle and not very efficient member of the establishment. After some years, however, he was by a lucky chance transferred to the Political Department, which is concerned with Indian Foreign Affairs and with the relations between the Government of India and the Native States and conducts the correspondence which is constantly passing between the India Office and the Foreign Office. No more important work could be found; but it requires special qualifications which are not very commonly met with. 'Mr. Moore,' writes Sir Arthur Godley, 'as soon as he was transferred, was a new man: he set to work with extraordinary energy and zeal and in a very short time acquired the reputation, which he never lost, of being among the most valuable servants of the Crown. His industry was immense, possibly excessive; his knowledge of his work, and of everything connected with it, was unrivalled: he had it always at his finger-ends; and his gift of rapid but clear, lucid and effective conversation and writing was hardly to be surpassed. When Lord Randolph came to the Office, it happened fortunately that, owing to some

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changes in the Department, Moore's services were available, though his age and position were by this time such as might have been expected to debar him from the office of Private Secretary. In this capacity he was exactly the man Lord Randolph needed; he supplied whatever was at first wanting to his chief, who treated him not only with the most complete confidence but really more as a colleague than as a subordinate; and it may safely be said that he contributed in no small degree to the success with which Lord Randolph discharged the duties of the two great offices which he successively held.'

Moore followed his chief from the India Office to the Treasury when Lord Salisbury's Administration of 1886 was formed, and Lord Randolph Churchill's resignation of the Chancellorship of the Exchequer seems to have struck him a fatal blow. In a sense it may be said to have broken his heart. His health had for some time suffered from the amount of work he imposed upon himself. He was an active, athletic man, a great hero in the annals of the Alpine Club; but he had undoubtedly overtasked both his mind and his body in the service of a master to whom he was not only personally but politically devoted. Fortunately, as it seemed, an opportunity occurred just then of offering him the headship of his old branch, the Political Department, in the India Office. He accepted it, and went abroad to the Riviera for a few weeks' rest. But he never recovered from his exhaustion and depression, caught a fever at Cannes and died there two months later

(February 2, 1887) at the age of 46. 'The Home Civil Service,' writes Sir Arthur Godley, 'has not, for very many years, sustained a greater loss.' 1885 Æt. 36

When Lord Randolph Churchill became Secretary of State for India on June 24, 1885, the imminent danger of war with Russia had been dispelled by the agreement of May 4. Under this it was arranged that Penjdeh should be neutralised till the boundary on that section of the frontier had been settled and that negotiations should be resumed at once in London as to the main points of the line of delimitation, the details of which alone would be examined and settled by Commissioners on the spot. Some progress had also been made towards defining the general line of the frontier by an agreement arrived at on May 22. That agreement, however, left open what was then the crucial question of how to reconcile the full possession by the Afghans of the Zulficar Pass, on which we insisted with the maintenance of the existing communications between points on the Russian side of the frontier which the Russian Government considered essential. This difficulty had declared itself before the change of Government took place and the negotiations on the subject were resumed by Lord Salisbury from the point at which they had been left by Lord Granville.

Little progress was made for some considerable time and the situation again became somewhat critical owing to the local excitement on both sides of the border and recollections of what had taken place at Penjdeh. Finally, however, an agreement was

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arrived at and embodied in a Protocol signed on September 10, which stated, in sufficient detail to ensure the completion of the work, the conditions under which the Commissioners on the spot were to carry out the actual demarcation. The agreement was one which, though it necessarily involved mutual concessions, enabled both parties to it to claim that they had made no sacrifice of vital points. From the British point of view the really important objects attained by the settlement were the maintenance of British credit with the Amir, whose interests had been successfully guarded, the escape from what for a long and anxious period had seemed a diplomatic *impasse* and the establishment of a frontier which has remained unaltered to this day.

The actual demarcation commenced on November 10, when Sir Joseph West Ridgeway met the Russian Commissioner at Zulficar. The work proved long and difficult; and the position of the British Agent, forced to winter with a small escort in that wild country, was full of peril to himself and caused constant anxiety at home. It was not until July 1887 that a Protocol was signed at St. Petersburg, completing the delimitation of the whole frontier between the Hari Rud and the Oxus.

Lord Randolph's letters to the Queen throw a clear light on his views and temper during this critical time. The dignified and ceremonious style which flowed so naturally from his pen may surprise the reader who is familiar with his platform speeches and his private letters.

India Office: July 11, 1885. 1885 Æt. 36

Lord Randolph Churchill presents his humble duty to your Majesty, and begs to submit the accompanying telegrams which have passed between the Viceroy of India and himself.

There can hardly be any doubt, in view of the remarkable expressions made use of by Mr. Gladstone on Tuesday last in the House of Commons, giving such strong confirmation as to the absolute pledge given by the Government of Russia, that the pass of Zulficar should be ceded to the Amir. Your Majesty's Government is in an exceptionally favourable position for taking up an unyielding attitude on this question. Parliament as a body is practically committed to the policy of faithful observance of pledges given to the Amir, and it may well be that so much Parliamentary unanimity on any large question of foreign policy may not occur again for a very long time. It is most earnestly to be hoped that this dispute with the Government of Russia, which really involves the whole Afghan Question as far as Russia is concerned, may be definitely decided one way or another before Parliament separates for the recess.

The negotiations have been extremely protracted. Troops are being massed, both by Russians and Afghans, near the frontier; the strain on the finances of India, caused by the obligation of keeping our military preparations in a very advanced state, is evidently causing the Viceroy uneasiness; and the character and credit of this country cannot well sustain any further concessions to Russia at the expense of our ally the Amir.

If this matter is not resolutely treated and definitely settled now, before Parliament separates, not only does the state of military emergency, so trying both to this country and to India, continue indefinitely, but there is great reason to believe that in September or October the Russians will make a further advance or aggression, just before the General Election here, causing the greatest alarm, confusion, excitement, and party feeling among the people, and consequently the greatest possible danger to the interests and security of

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India. Lord Randolph Churchill would humbly submit that no possible precaution should be neglected now in order, if possible, to obviate such an eventuality.

Lord Randolph Churchill humbly submits to your Majesty a memorandum he has drawn up on the subject of proposing to the Government of Russia and, if possible, concluding a comprehensive and to some extent permanent treaty, providing generally for the integrity of Afghanistan and the regulation of all frontier matters, and having appended to it a rough draft of the possible clauses of such a treaty.

India Office: July 13, 1885.

Lord Randolph Churchill presents his humble duty to your Majesty, and begs to submit that, as is pointed out by your Majesty, it would be in the highest degree desirable to have some information as to the manner in which a proposal for a comprehensive treaty on the Afghan Frontier Question would be received by the Government of Russia.

Lord Randolph Churchill has never supposed that a proposal of this kind would be favourably received by the Government of Russia unless it was known to that Power that such a proposal was favourably received by other European Powers, or that a refusal to view it in a friendly manner would place so singular an interpretation on Russian policy that the continuation of negotiations might become very difficult.

Such a state of things, favourable to the proposal for a treaty the rough draft of which has been humbly submitted to your Majesty, does not exist at the present moment. Whether such a state of things may be brought into existence Lord Randolph Churchill would not venture to determine positively, but he has often expressed to Lord Salisbury the opinion that an effort in this direction could not well be at variance with sound policy, and would in no way conflict with public opinion.

The observation which your Majesty graciously records, that under such a treaty as has been sketched your Majesty's

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Government would become responsible for the acts of the Amir, is profoundly accurate; and it may well be that such a policy is liable to most searching criticism, and might lead to serious evils. The whole policy which is best known as 'the buffer State policy' is herein called in question, and Lord Randolph Churchill is possessed by the gravest doubts as to whether that policy is the best which could be adopted for the security of your Majesty's Indian Empire.

In its defence it may be urged, (1) That that policy has been adopted by this country for very many years; with short and abrupt intervals it was the policy pursued when Dost Mahomed and when Shere Ali Khan ruled in Afghanistan. (2) That it is a policy to which both political parties in this country are deeply committed, and therefore it is a policy which, if it does not actually unite public men, perhaps divides them the least. (3) Under that policy pledges of a very binding character have been given to the present Amir, on several occasions, that as long as he is guided by the advice of your Majesty's Government in the conduct of his foreign relations your Majesty's Government will hold themselves responsible for, and will protect him from, any dangers and evils arising from that advice being followed. (4) It is a policy which, if it can be carried out (a very large and wide assumption), undoubtedly has the merit of keeping Russian influence very remote from actual contact with India.

The great danger of the policy alluded to is that it is dependent upon the caprice or the design of the Amir; that it may be upset at any moment by the revolt of the Governor of Badakshan in the north and of the Governor of Herat in the south-west of Afghanistan, by the escape of Ayoub Khan from Teheran, or by a decidedly aggressive movement of the Russian forces.

It may be doubted whether there is any real solution of our difficulties and dangers except in the breaking-up by force of arms of the Russian Asiatic Empire, an enterprise far less hazardous and doubtful, in Lord Randolph Churchill's

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opinion, than is generally supposed, but nevertheless an undertaking the responsibility of which would, except under extraordinary circumstances, terrify an Administration which at the present day has to face a House of Commons.

Lord Randolph Churchill humbly submits that in acknowledging the great force of your Majesty's observations graciously conveyed to him he has ventured to offer for your Majesty's consideration views and opinions which have for long been upon his mind, and Lord Randolph Churchill earnestly hopes that he may not have transgressed your Majesty's pleasure by too diffuse an exposition.

No further action could well be taken with regard to a treaty until the opinion of the Viceroy has been fully ascertained.

India Office: July 15, 1885.

Lord Randolph Churchill presents his humble duty to your Majesty, and begs to submit that there can be little doubt that your Majesty's apprehension that the Government of Russia will try to evade the half-promise they gave to cede the pass of Zulficar to the Afghan Amir is well founded. Lord Randolph Churchill would humbly submit to your Majesty whether the original pledge given by the Russians was not very full and unreserved, the difficulty about communications being raised subsequently. In the note to M. de Staal Lord Salisbury has taken this view very plainly. Colonel Ridgeway's telegrams cannot well be regarded as at all reassuring, though there is reason to hope that the news in No. 97 may not be altogether so grave as at first seemed to appear. The sequence of events from day to day does not at all weaken the views on the whole boundary question which Lord Randolph Churchill has from time to time humbly submitted to your Majesty, and Lord Randolph Churchill is more than ever of opinion that a firm and resolute insistence on the faithful fulfilment of Russian pledges is not only vital to your Majesty's interests, but perhaps in reality the best method of averting an eventual rupture of negotiations.

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While Lord Salisbury at the Foreign Office was rapidly gathering into his skilful hands the tense and tangled threads of British diplomacy, the Secretary of State for India took pains to secure an effective defence upon the spot. Until the advance of Russia had reached the borders of Afghanistan, the functions of the military forces of India had been limited to maintaining internal peace or to frontier operations against adversaries of limited power. Now that a great European Power, liable at any time to become hostile, was in close proximity to the Afghan border, it was evident that the existing military establishments must be strengthened. The British troops in India were accordingly increased by 11 batteries of artillery (30 guns and 1,373 men), by the addition of a fourth squadron to each British cavalry regiment (1,332 men), and by the addition of three battalions of infantry and the augmentation of each of those already serving by 100 rank and file, amounting to 196 officers and 10,567 men. The increase of the British garrison allowed an expansion — in recognised proportion — of the native army. Most of the cavalry regiments were raised to four squadrons each and three new native cavalry regiments were formed, making an increase of 56 British officers and 4,572 natives of all ranks. Nine new native infantry battalions were enlisted and the strength of the existing regiments was increased — a total addition of 63 British officers and 11,968 natives of all ranks. Various improvements were made in the position of the native soldier and a native Army

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Reserve was formed of 23,000 men. The Ordnance and Commissariat Departments were reorganised and an Army Transport Department was formed. The construction of strategical railways, roads and bridges on the North-West Frontier was undertaken, and Karachi harbour was improved as part of a general scheme of defence. Although all these military preparations were rapidly pushed forward, this substantial increase of power was secured at an initial cost of about one and a half millions sterling and maintained at an annual charge of not much more than one million pounds a year. Lord Randolph also approved, shortly before he left the India Office, of a proposal for arming the native army with the best rifle available and placing it in this respect on an equal footing with British troops. This change, however, was long delayed.

Scarcely anything that Lord Randolph Churchill did as a Minister gave him more pleasure than the appointment of Sir Frederick Roberts to be Commander-in-Chief in India. It was almost the first important step which he took on coming into power. Very powerful influences supported the high claims of Lord Wolseley and, as the appointment of the Indian Commander-in-Chief rested according to practice with the Secretary of State for War, the matter hung for some days in suspense. But Lord Randolph was insistent. His long and friendly talks with Sir Frederick Roberts during his visit to India had made a great impression upon him. All his life he continued to assert that Roberts was the first soldier

of his age. The Russian crisis and Sir Frederick's unequalled service and experience in the theatre of possible war constituted in his eyes overwhelming qualifications. He won the agreement of Lord Salisbury; he persuaded the Queen. In less than five weeks after the Government had taken office, the appointment was announced and was received with general assent and satisfaction. 1885 ÆT. 36

In conjunction with this appointment and with the military preparations, orders were given and money supplied for a Camp of Exercise to be prepared upon a much larger scale than had ever been held in India before. The troops were mobilised early in 1886 in two Army Corps. They assembled at Umballa and Gurgaon — towns 150 miles apart — and after a fortnight of brigade and divisional tactics, the opposing forces came into contact near the famous battle-ground of Panipat. This was the first occasion on which representatives from foreign armies had been invited to be present at Indian manœuvres. Lord Randolph Churchill arranged that the invitations should be sent through the Foreign Office; and Lord Dufferin, who was present during the closing days of the operations, was accompanied by twelve officers from the principal armies of Europe and America.

On August 6 the Secretary of State for India laid the Indian Budget before the House. This statement, coming as it does during the 'Dog Days,' at the end of the Session, is usually heard in its ponderous complexity with apathy by an empty and

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exhausted House. But the importance of public departments varies with the authority of the Minister who directs them. The Chamber was filled with members in all the interest and eagerness of a great Parliamentary occasion. Nor were they disappointed. Lord Randolph had no difficulty in holding their attention for upwards of an hour and three-quarters while he unfolded in stately language, but with the utmost simplicity and clearness, the wide scroll of Asia. Intricate and unfamiliar figures, facts and problems tangled with strange names and novel conditions, submitted themselves willingly to his interesting narration. The account was not cheering in its character. The confusion of Indian finances had permitted an astounding error in the Budget calculations of Lord Ripon's Government and the new Minister had to announce to Parliament a heavy deficit, largely unforeseen. The Russian crisis, moreover, imposed upon India the necessity of extensive military preparations. Before he had spoken very long the House realised that Lord Randolph was developing an elaborate indictment of the late Viceroy.

'The most unpardonable crime,' he said, 'of which the Governor-General of India can be guilty, is not to look ahead and make provision for the future. The Government of England cannot from its very nature look far ahead; its policy is always one of month to month, of week to week and sometimes of day to day; it is always more or less a policy of hand to mouth. The reason is, that our Govern-

ment in England depends upon a Parliamentary majority which is violently assailed and swayed by an enlightened, but at the same time by a capricious public opinion. The Government of England has to think, in shaping its policy, of the state of Europe, of the Colonies and of Ireland; of the state of England; and last, not least, of the state of business in the House of Commons. It has to think of all those subjects, and the result is, that although we in England possess an unrivalled Constitution and unexampled freedom, yet for the purpose of that freedom we have to put up with the disadvantage of little stability and little continuity in our Government and hardly any forethought in our policy. The Government of India is exempt from all these disadvantages. It is a Government in its nature purely despotic, but it is not an hereditary despotism. We do our best to supply India from time to time with statesmen who shall exercise this tremendous power of government, but who shall at the same time be wise, experienced and courageous. In India it is not as in England. In India there is no public opinion to speak of, no powerful press, and hardly any trammels upon the Government of any sort or kind. For that reason I say that if the Governor-General of India does not look ahead and provide for the future, he not only commits a blunder but is guilty of a crime.

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'I am compelled to apply this general statement to the Government of Lord Ripon. Lord Ripon went out to India with a full knowledge of the

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state of affairs; he knew of all the events which had occurred — of the Russo-Turkish War which led to the Treaty of San Stefano and the Congress of Berlin; he knew of all the events which had caused the great preparations of Russia for advancing on India. He must have had knowledge of the gradual but sure extension of the Russian Empire in Asia. . . . I say nothing of the abandonment of Candahar. I say little of the destruction of the Quetta Railway. I come rather to the acts of Lord Ripon's Government which seriously affected the finances of this year. Lord Ripon had prosperous times to deal with and an increasing revenue. The sky overhead, to the careless observer, seemed very blue. All dangers apparently had passed away so far as foreign affairs were concerned and so far as they had any bearing upon Indian finances, and Lord Ripon and his counsellors laid themselves down and slept. All indirect taxation of any value was remitted, the Customs duty was almost totally abolished and the salt duty was reduced. In 1882–3 the Indian army was reduced by five cavalry regiments and sixteen infantry regiments. The British army was allowed to fall to 10,000 men below its proper strength. To bring it up to its full strength, which it has now nearly attained, has cost the Indian Government 100,000*l*. No frontier railways were commenced; no roads were begun; no preparations were made for the defence of a long and difficult frontier. Surely in prosperous times a wise man would have provided for the event of a rainy day. But Lord Ripon slept,

lulled by the languor of the land of the lotus. Yet there was much which ought to have warned and to have roused him. In 1882 the Russian Government, with the frankest candour, called our attention to their proceedings in Central Asia and invited us to delimit the frontier of Afghanistan; but the only reply they received was a dull and sullen reply, as of a man under the influence of a narcotic. Our ally, the Amir of Afghanistan, also sent many warnings. It is most curious to observe, in the account of the interview of the Amir with Lord Dufferin at Rawul Pindi, how frequently we come across that familiar saying "I told you so." All this time the cloud grew bigger, the distant darkness nearer and blacker and the great military Power loomed larger and more distinct upon our borders; yet Lord Ripon and his counsellors slumbered and slept, never dreaming that any foreign danger could by any possibility come nigh those dominions which had been entrusted to their watchful care, taking no thought for the morrow, heedless and ignorant of the future which was shaping itself with the utmost clearness under their very eyes. Then, sir, there came a sharp and sudden awakening. Russia's hosts absorbed the territory of Merv, rapidly filled up the vacuum to the south which had been so blindly left unprovided for by us, and Lord Ripon and his counsellors were found, like the foolish virgins, with no oil in their lamps. Then followed the fruitless frontier negotiations and Lord Ripon came home and Lord Dufferin went out, not one hour too soon for the safety of India and the tranquillity of the East.

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Next we see the lonely and unsupported British Commissioner endeavouring to stay the advance of the Russian troops — troops flushed with success and animated by the highest hopes of glory and of booty. Then came the incident of Penjdeh and, following that, the vote of credit of eleven millions. Next we see the hasty and hurried recommencement of the Quetta Railway which had been so foolishly abandoned. Then came the announcement of the frontier railways and roads too fatally postponed. And then came the additional military expenditure, from three to four millions; and the result of it all is now before the House in the deficit in the Indian accounts of a million and a half and in the permanent extra military charge of no less than two millions a year.[1] The good time has gone; the advantages which we had, have been thrown away. No economy whatever was practised by that Government. The expenditure on civil buildings was allowed to be increased by over one million a year. The Famine Insurance Fund, on which we prided ourselves, has been proved in time of trial to be illusory. I declare that I endeavoured to contemplate the action of the late Government of India without party passion. I found in it not one redeeming feature. Indian interests were so clumsily, so stupidly, handled that progress has been thrown back almost for a generation; and having to place those results before the House of Commons in the practical and matter-of-fact form of figures and finance, I disown and repudiate on behalf of the

[1] This appears to have been an outside estimate. (See p. 490.)

present Government all responsibility of any sort or kind for that policy and I hold up that Viceroyalty and the Government responsible for it to the censure and the condemnation of the British and Indian peoples. 1885 ÆT. 36

'This Parliament,' he concluded, after a survey of many matters interesting in themselves, but too specialised for quotation here, 'has done little or nothing for India. It would appear as if members of Parliament of the present generation considered Indian affairs to be either beneath their attention or above their comprehension, and India is apparently left to pursue its destiny alone — some might even think uncared for — as far as Parliament is concerned. That was not always the case. In the last century, when our Indian Empire was forming, the greatest men — Mr. Pitt and Mr. Burke and Mr. Fox — did not disdain to apply their minds to the most careful examination and exposition of the difficult and complicated Indian questions, and with great advantage. At the present time, when everything around is changing fast and when nothing seems secure or firm or free from assault and danger, as far as India is concerned, we shall act wisely if we revert to the more patriotic practice of earlier days. I would ask those who have been so kind as to listen to me, and those who possibly may not have concurred in many remarks I have made, to join with me in what I would call an appeal, or even, almost, a command, to those who will be our successors, some faint echo of which may possibly linger around these walls and

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influence the new Parliament so shortly to meet here: I would ask those who hear me to join in an appeal to the members of the new Parliament to shake themselves free from the lassitude, the carelessness, the apathy, which have too long characterised the attitude of Parliament towards India. I would appeal to them to watch with the most sedulous attention, to develop with the most anxious care, to guard with the most united and undying resolution, the land and the people of Hindostan, that most truly bright and precious gem in the crown of the Queen, the possession of which, more than that of all your Colonial dominions, has raised in power, in resource, in wealth and in authority this small island home of ours far above the level of the majority of nations and of States — has placed it on an equality with, perhaps even in a position of superiority over, every other Empire either of ancient or of modern times.'

With this impressive harangue the 'Ministry of Caretakers' may be said to have brought the Session and the Parliament to a close.

Upon Lord Randolph's acceptance of office begins a constant, intimate and candid correspondence with Lord Salisbury, which ranges over the whole field of politics at home and abroad, continues with almost equal fulness in Opposition and in Government and ends abruptly in January 1887. Their letters were never more frequent than when Lord Randolph was at the India Office. The fortunes of India were at this time inseparably interwoven with the conduct of the

Foreign Office — at first in regard to Russia and Afghanistan, and later on in regard to France and China on account of Burma — and Lord Randolph was always most particular to consult the Prime Minister on any matter of importance and to take no serious step without his concurrence. Lord Salisbury, on the other hand, had much to give to an Indian Secretary. He possessed a vast knowledge of Indian affairs, gained during his prolonged administration of that department; and in all matters of official method, of procedure and etiquette, his guidance was especially valuable to a Minister altogether unversed in the details of administration. 1885 Æt. 36

Lord Salisbury was, like Lord Randolph Churchill, a prodigious letter-writer, and he seems to have written no fewer than 110 letters to his lieutenant — many of them very long ones — all in his beautiful running handwriting, during the seven months of his first Ministry. How he ever found time to write so many to a single Minister is a marvel. Often three letters passed between them in a day. On July 25, for instance, Lord Salisbury wrote four times to Lord Randolph on different subjects, all of considerable importance. Two of these letters cover between them five separate pieces of closely written notepaper. To a later generation, accustomed to shorthand writers and anticipating a time when it will be regarded as inconsiderate to address a person on business otherwise than in type, such manual energy is astounding. Whether elaborate letter-writing between

1885 Ministers is conducive to the facile conduct of public affairs is doubtful. Strength and time are consumed, difficulties are multiplied and differences only look wider and more formidable when marshalled by ink and paper. Many of the questions laboriously discussed on both sides of this correspondence could have been despatched immediately at an interview or even upon a telephone. But Lord Salisbury did not like political conversations. He felt that he could not do so much justice to himself or his opinions in an informal discussion as he could either in a letter or a speech. He belonged, moreover, to a formal, painstaking, old-fashioned school; and in Lord Randolph Churchill he had a pupil unexpectedly apt and energetic.

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Whatever may have been lost at the time has been gained by posterity, for Lord Salisbury's letters have a character and interest apart from and even superior to the important matters with which they deal. A wit at once shrewd and genial; an insight into human nature penetrating, comprehensive, rather cynical; a vast knowledge of affairs; the quick thoughts of a moody, fertile mind, expressed in language that always preserves a spice and flavour of its own, are qualities which must exert an attraction upon a generation to whom the politics of the '85 Government will be dust.

Throughout their association the letters of both men — whether in agreement or in sharpest dispute — are marked by personal goodwill; and Lord Randolph never for a moment drops the air of respect and

deference with which he invariably treated Lord Salisbury and which is never more pronounced than in moments of stress. Lord Salisbury's counsels and comments are always instructive and so often amusing that I may be allowed to transcribe a few at random: 'My dear Randolph,' the letters begin (June 25), '(if I may venture to address a Secretary of State in such familiar fashion!), — So much has been made of Herat, that we must do more than is possible to defend it' (July 25). 'I quite agree with your doctrine that it is better to go at the principal offender rather than the instrument — with one important qualification — *if you can*' (August 4). 'It is curious to notice how the "buffer State" policy has gone down in the world. When first I had to do with India, nineteen years ago, it was the supremest orthodoxy: you might as well have impugned one of the doctrines of Free Trade' (August 4). Upon a curious little question of Portuguese ecclesiastical establishments in India he writes (August 24): 'I am glad to see you take the same view as on the first blush I was inclined to take. The Government of India by its nature must ignore religious questions, except so far as they take the secular form of furnishing a pretext for either robbery or riot.' 'I am inclined to think you underrate H——. He knows these odd people in a way we cannot do. I should be as much inclined to set up my opinion against that of the keeper of an asylum on the best way of keeping lunatics quiet' (November 24). Again, in another letter on the same day: 1885 ÆT. 36

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'I am afraid F.O. and I.O. have hopelessly divergent opinions on H——'s trustworthiness. But I think that when Departments differ on a point which is not worthy of reference to the Cabinet, the best rule is that the Department should prevail which will have the trouble of dealing with the consequences of a mistake if a mistake is made. The India Office view should therefore prevail.'

'Honours' and promotions of various kinds prove a thorny business to handle, more especially after an episode soon to be recorded. 'I was not aware that Mr. * * * had been disappointed. He bears a high character in the service, and I shall be glad to assist him if I have the opportunity. But it is perilous to go out of the beaten track in matters of promotion. I remember doing it in 1878, and I had a vote of censure moved on me in the House of Commons by a Conservative' (January 8, 1886). 'I am afraid that in the matter of honours I am as destitute as you are. The C.B.'s are all exhausted' (June 20). And again (November 13): 'My Baths are all run dry.' 'There can be no doubt that * * * is a very fit candidate for the Privy Council and I will submit his name at once. We may take more time to consider over the other two — who are less distinguished: it will be time enough to settle whenever a much-to-be-regretted accident befalls us. Unless * * * is very much changed, I doubt your getting him to resign for a Privy Councillorship. If I might follow the precedents of the early Church I should like to make * * * a Bishop' (December 5). 'That

fountain which you desire to have turned on for the benefit of Birmingham is frozen up — and only runs with a dribble. It is very difficult to restore it to activity' (November 13). 1885 ÆT. 36

The pleasant flow of this correspondence was very soon disturbed by an interlude which might have broken up many other things as well. The Bombay command, which at that date was a post of much dignity and importance, carrying the title of Commander-in-Chief and giving the holder a seat on the Governor's Council, became vacant about the same time that the new Government took office. In the prevailing uncertainty upon the frontier Lord Randolph Churchill desired that it should be filled at once. He agreed with Mr. Smith at the War Office upon an officer. The Queen, however, was anxious that the Duke of Connaught should serve in high command in India and Lord Salisbury strongly urged her wishes upon the Secretary of State. 'Though I am quite ready to accept the responsibility of your decision,' he wrote (July 25), 'I cannot, speaking confidentially, take quite your view. I hold that in India the monarchy must seem to be as little constitutional as possible; that it is of great importance to obtrude upon the native Indian mind the personality of the Sovereign and her family; and that, therefore, the policy of giving high military command to one of the Queen's sons is a step of political importance; and that its value is far from being outweighed by the more restricted considerations attaching to military susceptibilities or the details

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of military administration. . . . However, though my opinions on it are clear, the matter is one for your decision.'

Lord Randolph Churchill resisted the appointment with an obstinate determination. It need scarcely be said that his reasons were not based on any suggestion that the Duke of Connaught was not fully qualified to discharge the military duties of the office. They consisted entirely in the grave constitutional objections which exist to the employment of Royal Princes in positions, such as the Bombay command then was, which carry with them the necessity of speaking and voting constantly in Council, and where numerous and important *political* functions, apart from military duty, may at any moment devolve upon the General officer in command. These reasons were unanimously accepted as decisive by the Cabinet on October 9. While the matter was still in suspense there occurred an incident which is, on various grounds, indispensable to the completeness of this story. The letters tell their own tale:—

Lord Salisbury to Lord Randolph Churchill.

(*Very Confidential.*) Hatfield House, Hatfield, Herts: August 14, 1885.

My dear Randolph, — About ten days ago the Queen wrote to me and told me to send a private telegram to Lord Dufferin in the following words:

'How would it be for the Duke of Connaught to succeed to the command at Bombay? I wish for your opinion by telegraph after you have consulted Sir Donald Stewart and

Sir Frederick Roberts, both of whom, I know, think very highly of the Duke of Connaught's qualifications.' 1885 Æt. 36

As it is quite regular for the Queen to communicate directly with the Viceroy, I simply cyphered and sent the telegram without note or comment on my part.

At the beginning of this week I received from the Viceroy and forwarded to the Queen, also without any comment, the following reply:

'Secret and Personal. Please submit following to Her Majesty. Both Sir Frederick Roberts and the Commander-in-Chief entirely approve of the idea of the Duke of Connaught's appointment to the command of the Bombay army. The Commander-in-Chief observes that the Duke was the best of his General officers, and he considers that he possesses great tact in dealing with the natives. Speaking from a political point of view, I have always considered it a very good thing that one of H.M.'s sons should be in India. The presence of the Duchess of Connaught also exercises a very wholesome effect upon Indian society. Personally I should welcome H.R.H.'s return with the greatest satisfaction.'

The next day there came the following from the Viceroy, which was also sent on to the Queen:

'I conclude you know that in a despatch which will go home next week, or the week following, we are reiterating the proposals already made by the Indian Government for the amalgamation of the Presidential armies, in which case the command at Bombay would be that of a Lieutenant-General. Perhaps you will mention this to Her Majesty.'

I then requested the Queen that I might be allowed to communicate these telegrams to you, which I have received permission to do.

I have not offered her any advice on this matter since I last wrote to you about it — except to defer any public decision till after the election.

My advice to you, however, would be to give way, so far as the Lieutenant-Generalship is concerned; that is to say,

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subject to the last telegram. It is probable that these three men are sincere in substance in what they recommend; and, if so, there is no doubt they are probably right — and our position (if we oppose them) will be a very difficult one to maintain. On the other hand, I think no declaration should be made before the elections.

Believe me
Yours very truly,
SALISBURY.

Lord Randolph Churchill to Lord Salisbury.

Carlton Club: August 14, 1885.

Dear Lord Salisbury, — I have just received your two letters; one about the succession to the Bombay Command, and the other about giving Mr. Gorst[1] a nomination for the examination for the F.O. I am very greatly obliged to you for your kindness in this latter matter.

The first subject is very serious, to my mind. I cannot continue to hold with any advantage the high position which H.M. the Queen has conferred upon me unless I feel I have the confidence of the Sovereign and her principal advisers. This elementary qualification I am without. Some time ago I placed you in possession of the objections which I and others saw to the Bombay Command being conferred upon the Duke of Connaught. I was not aware that it was possible, under such circumstances, that communications should pass between the Prime Minister and the Viceroy, at the instance of H.M. the Queen, without the knowledge of the Secretary of State, on a matter on which the latter held very strong and deliberate opinions.

I have for some time felt that the India Office, while I was there, had little influence with respect to other matters of great importance. But from what has passed between yourself and the Viceroy about the Duke of Connaught, it must be obvious to the Viceroy that I no longer possess

[1] Sir John Gorst's eldest son, now Sir Eldon Gorst.

either the confidence of the Sovereign or of yourself, and, under these circumstances, I respectfully ask you to submit to H.M. the Queen my resignation of the office which I have now the honour to hold.

Yours very sincerely,

RANDOLPH S. CHURCHILL.

Lord Salisbury to Lord Randolph Churchill.

Private. Hatfield House, Hatfield, Herts: August 14, 1885.

My dear Randolph, — I am sorry you take such a view of a correspondence that is perfectly regular. The Queen has always written private letters to the Viceroy, and has always received private answers from him, both received and sent without any knowledge of any of her Ministers. She would have telegraphed in the same way, only the Viceroy did not happen to have her cypher. I did nothing else but cypher and decypher the message for her. I could no more inform you of her private telegram, without her leave, than I could inform you of a private letter, if I had been asked to copy it for her, without her leave.

I regret very much that you should think I have not shown you confidence. I have done my best to give effect to your wishes as far as I possibly could. In this case I think you are really under a misapprehension. What has passed does not pledge your liberty of action, or decide the question in issue. The question is exactly where it would have been if the Queen, instead of telegraphing, had written to Lord Dufferin. It would still have remained to be decided by her responsible Ministers. The only effect of the telegraphing has been to ante-date the issue by five or six weeks.

I trust I have removed from your mind all misapprehension of the character and effects of the Queen's correspondence with Lord Dufferin.

Believe me

Yours very truly,

SALISBURY.

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Lord Randolph Churchill to Mr. Moore.

Dear Mr. Moore, — Will you copy the enclosed letter to Lord S., and send it to Hatfield? A special messenger is not necessary.

Yours very truly,
RANDOLPH S. C.

Lord Randolph Churchill to Lord Salisbury.

2 Connaught Place, W.: August 15.

Dear Lord Salisbury, — You write to me, as usual, very kindly, for which I am indeed grateful; but the impressions with which I received your letter of yesterday remain as strong as ever. God forbid that I should allow myself for one moment to throw a shadow of a doubt upon the right of the Sovereign to communicate with the utmost freedom on any conceivable matter with any one of her subjects; but I submit that a very different question arises when a communication from the Queen to so high an official as the Viceroy of India on a matter of high State importance passes through the Prime Minister. Such a communication, so sent, acquires a character of responsibility which it would not otherwise possess.

Moreover, the matter becomes complicated indeed when it happens to be the fact that it is in the knowledge of the Prime Minister that the Royal communication which he forwards contains a suggestion — or rather, I may say, makes a proposal — to which the responsible head of the Department chiefly concerned entertains the strongest possible objections.

The communications from the Queen direct to the Viceroy may be frequent — I can see no reason why they should not be; but it would appear that telegraphic messages on matters of a very confidential and important nature have not been usual hitherto; otherwise surely the Viceroy would have been provided with a copy of the Queen's cypher.

Generally, I would further submit to you the following:

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My position in relation to Lord Dufferin is in many ways anomalous. He is old enough to be my father, has been all his life in public affairs, has acquired an immense reputation. Clearly, therefore, it is curious that I should be placed in a position of superiority over him — I who have had no experience of official life, a very short experience of public life, and have not acquired any reputation worth speaking of.

Under the circumstances the relations between the Secretary of State and the Viceroy can be attended with no advantage to the public service, on the contrary must be attended with the utmost disadvantage, unless it is, more than usually even, obvious to the latter that the former possesses the full, complete and perfect confidence of the Prime Minister.

Lord Dufferin is no ordinary man. He has a greater faculty for putting two and two together than most men. I have not the smallest doubts as to the nature of the impression left upon his mind by the Royal communication on the subject of the Duke of Connaught as it has reached him. In about a week he will get a letter from me in which I gave at great length, and with all the arguments that had occurred to me, my strong objections to the appointment in question. He will find that he has committed himself somewhat lightly, and after the manner of a courtier — influenced, no doubt, by the fact that the inquiry came through you — to an opinion diametrically at variance with that of the Secretary of State, and he will know that in so doing the Prime Minister is on his side. If you follow my argument and concur in the premises on which it is based, I think you will easily see that satisfactory and advantageous relations between me and Lord Dufferin, which under the best circumstances were difficult, will now have become impossible.

The superiority of the Secretary of State over the Viceroy, as intended by the Constitution of the Indian Government, will exist only in name as far as I am concerned, and this must have a most unfortunate effect on all questions of Indian administration. I shall never know, moreover, what

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communications may not be passing between the Queen, the Prime Minister and the Viceroy on matters of great and small importance; and this element of uncertainty and ignorance of events will prevent me from being of the smallest utility.

The appointment of the Duke of Connaught to a high and very responsible military command in India is, as it appears to me, a question of the utmost importance. It is not my business to point out how largely is raised by it the constitutional position of Royal Princes in these days; though I infer that you are aware of the existence of objections of very considerable weight, from the stipulation which you make with the Queen that no public declaration of the appointment should be made till after the elections. I am concerned only with the matter as it affects India generally, and the Indian Army in particular. Although the Secretary of State is not solely responsible for such an appointment, he practically is the person most identified with it in the public mind: and if it was not for my inexperience of official life, I should have thought that it was absolutely impossible that the freedom of action of the Secretary of State on so important a matter could be so absolutely demolished as it has been in this case.

I may add, to show the extreme inconvenience of allowing matters of this kind to be prematurely settled without the knowledge of the Department chiefly concerned, that the Viceroy's proposal that the Duke of Connaught should have the command of a Corps d'Armée with the rank of Lieutenant-General is absolutely impracticable at the present time. Even assuming that the new proposals of the Government of India for the amalgamation of the Bombay and Madras Commands were approved of by the Secretary of State in Council, and this is very uncertain, they would require, before they could be entered upon, an Act of Parliament. A Bill introduced into the House of Commons for this purpose would lead to much debate; it would necessarily raise very large questions of Indian government, military

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and political; might easily fail to pass into law, and at the best would hardly receive the Royal Assent till the early autumn of next year. It cannot be supposed that all this while the Bombay Army could be left without a responsible chief.

Under all these circumstances I remain of the opinion which I expressed to you yesterday. From the first I always had great doubts whether my being in the Government would be any advantage to the Government or to the party. All doubts on the point are now removed from my mind. A first-class question of Indian administration has been taken out of my hands, and at any moment this action may recur, and it is clear to the Viceroy that I do not occupy towards himself the position which the Secretary of State ought and is supposed to occupy.

I therefore with much respect adhere to the views which I put before you yesterday.

Believe me to be

Yours very sincerely,

RANDOLPH S. CHURCHILL.

P.S. — I enclose for your consideration an extract from my letter to Lord Dufferin of July 31.

His advice, which I asked for, will not be worth much now.

Lord Salisbury to Lord Randolph Churchill.

Private. Hatfield House, Hatfield, Herts: August 15, 1885.

My dear Randolph, — I had no intention of taking any decision out of your hands, and I think in attributing it to me you do not put fairly the position in which I was placed. The Queen's desire for privacy was very natural. The question she was asking about her son might have had an unfavourable answer: and then she would naturally wish that as few should know it as possible. I could not, therefore, do otherwise than I did — send the message, and urge her to communicate it to you as soon as I knew it

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could be done satisfactorily. It would not have been honourable to communicate it before. Perhaps I might, if I had thought of it, have sent the cypher to Ponsonby — but that would hardly have been civil; and it did not occur to me that you would take this objection. As a matter of fact I did not communicate with the Viceroy otherwise than by transmitting that which was sent to me. But if I had done so I should not have done anything unusual. Lord Beaconsfield used to do it occasionally: and Lord Dufferin wrote to me and asked me to correspond with him. The Viceroy is nominated by the Prime Minister, not by the Secretary of State. I only say this because I am concerned to show that I have not behaved unfairly to you, or taken anything out of your hand. But I do not hold to this power of corresponding either by letter or wire with the Viceroy: and if you really feel that 'you will never know what communications are passing between the Queen, the Prime Minister, and the Viceroy,' I am quite ready to give up for myself the right of communicating with him.

Of course, you must take what course you think right. I should be sorry if, out of mere suspicion of me, you took a step which will tend to break up the party at a critical time: and still more that you should do it on a matter which can hardly fail to make the Queen's name and actions matter of public controversy. But, at all events, before you take any definite step I trust you will talk to me about it. I shall be going through town on Tuesday to Osborne. If you are still there, would you come to me at two o'clock?

Yours very truly,

SALISBURY.

Lord Randolph Churchill to Lord Salisbury.

2 Connaught Place, W.: August 16.

Dear Lord Salisbury, — I feel I cannot persist easily in urging my view upon you after your letter received this morning, though it does appear to me that you have not

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allowed yourself to appreciate with perfect justice the consideration which I tried to convey to you. It can be no satisfaction to me to be the means of depriving Lord Dufferin of the advantage, instruction and pleasure which correspondence direct with you cannot fail to afford him, and I do not quite understand how you can think me capable of such a purpose.

Further, I am much distressed that you should suppose that the step which I was anxious to take (and which I still firmly believe would be for the advantage of all concerned) could be animated by so unworthy a motive as 'suspicion of you.'

My argument was that, viewing all the surrounding circumstances together, the peculiar occurrence about which I wrote had seriously, if not irreparably, impaired my power of being useful to your Government.

Perhaps, before finally putting aside what I have pressed upon you, you will kindly give Mr. Moore an interview. He understands and can explain the position as I regard it much better than I can make it clear by letter.

I shall be happy to wait upon you on Tuesday in accordance with your desire, if I am allowed to leave the house, to which for the last two days I have been kept a prisoner.

Yours very sincerely,

RANDOLPH S. CHURCHILL.

Note by Mr. Moore.

I went to Hatfield on Sunday August 16, and saw Lord Salisbury. The result was that he spontaneously proposed to send the subjoined telegram to the Viceroy, which he thought would remove any misapprehension on the part of Lord Dufferin. I took the draft to Lord Randolph, who quite concurred. The matter was thus settled. — A. W. M.

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Lord Salisbury to Mr. Moore.

Private. Hatfield House, Hatfield, Herts:
Sunday, August 16, 1885.

Dear Mr. Moore, — I am not sure that the last phrase in the draft telegram I gave you is sufficiently accurate. It should run:

'My own view — *though inclining towards the proposal* — is not very decided on the subject.'

That is very much what Lord R. C. said in his letter.

Yours very truly,
SALISBURY.

DRAFT TELEGRAM.

Lord Salisbury to Lord Dufferin.

Most secret. Your telegraphic correspondence with the Queen. It may be as well to put upon record that the telegram I sent you was from the Queen and that I merely transmitted it. The Cabinet have not considered the question; there is much difference of opinion on the subject, and my own view, though inclining to the proposal, is not very decided.

Lord Salisbury to Lord Randolph Churchill.

Private. Hatfield House, Hatfield, Herts: August 16, 1885.

My dear Randolph, — I was very glad to receive your letter, for it would have been very painful if we had 'come in two' over this matter. I saw Mr. Moore, whose power of exposition I knew of old. I gave him a draft telegram which, if you approve, I will send, and which will prevent any possible misapprehension in Dufferin's mind. I do not the least fear any such misapprehension — for he is an old public servant, and knows the Queen's ways well. You need not have the least anxiety about your authority with Dufferin. I shall be very glad if your health is sufficiently

restored to enable you to come about two on Tuesday to my house. I can explain any point you wish explained, and I can tell you what Staal has said. 1885 Æt. 36

Ever yours very truly,

SALISBURY.

Opinions vary on the merits of this dispute. Some of those who have held great office have informed me that the Secretary of State for India had no choice but to tender his resignation after such an incident: and it is certainly curious that so high an authority upon Ministerial propriety as Lord Salisbury should have allowed the difficulty to arise. On the other hand, it may be urged that personal slights, however provoking, ought never to be allowed to compromise a great political situation. Probably Sir Michael Hicks-Beach, in his dry way, summed the question up correctly: —

Sir Michael Hicks-Beach to Lord Randolph Churchill.

Many thanks for sending me the correspondence, which I return. I am the more glad of its conclusion, because I think there is reason on both sides. The Queen put Salisbury in an almost impossible position by asking him to forward the telegram. He could not tell you of it and it would have been very difficult, perhaps impossible, for him to interfere with her *private* correspondence by suggesting that she should reconsider it. But, on the other hand, I agree with you that the very fact of *his* forwarding it must have suggested to Dufferin that it was something more than the Queen's private opinion.

Salisbury has written to tell me what has passed and I have therefore ventured to suggest to him that Ponsonby should have the cypher, so that what has occurred should

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not happen again. So far as I know, the Queen exercises her right of private correspondence with great care, to avoid anything that would affect the decisions of Ministers; and this exception to the rule was obviously due to the personal nature of the question, which Dufferin (had the telegram been sent by Ponsonby) would have quite appreciated.

But please forgive me for saying that I think you looked at this matter rather too seriously last Friday. I think I should have been more inclined to laugh at the story of the telegram than to treat it as a proof of want of confidence on the part of the Queen and Prime Minister. If you had not been ill you would never have said of yourself in your letter to me that 'I have no longer any energy or ideas, and am no more good except to make disturbance.' And I suspect the same reason has influenced your view of this telegram affair.

The sequel, so far as concerned the Bombay command, was simple. Lord Dufferin perceived from Lord Salisbury's second telegram that grave differences had arisen in the Cabinet and that the matter would not be settled with easy and deferential good-humour. Upon receiving Lord Randolph's despatch on the subject, the Viceroy, while seeming to re-iterate his opinion, ranged himself with the Secretary of State in the following dexterous sentence: 'The fact of our having proposed the abolition of the Presidential Commanderships-in-Chief has got rid of what otherwise would have been *an insuperable objection*[1]: namely, the political responsibilities of the Bombay Commander-in-Chief as a member of Council' (August 21). As this proposal involved the carrying of a Bill through the House of Commons, the 'insuperable objection' must have held good until the

[1] The italics are mine. — W. S. C.

autumn of 1886 — even had the Government survived. The Cabinet, to whom the matter was referred, unanimously decided (October 9) 'that the political position of the Commander-in-Chief of a presidency army could not be filled by a son of the Queen';[1] and the Bombay command remained vacant during the remaining tenure of the Government. It should, however, be added, lest anything in the foregoing correspondence should seem to reflect upon the Duke of Connaught, that under Lord Salisbury's second Administration, the 'insuperable objection' being removed by the abolition of Presidential Commanders-in-Chief with their customary political functions, he was appointed to the Bombay command and discharged its military duties with conspicuous advantage to the public.

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But the consequences were more lasting outside the actual subject of dispute. Although the correspondence between Lord Randolph and the Prime Minister ripples on as pleasantly as ever, although in the next few months their comradeship became increasingly cordial, it cannot be supposed that such a conflict could pass away without leaving scars. Lord Salisbury could not forget, Lord Randolph Churchill could not but remember, what the result of a resignation had been.

Last in chronology, first in importance, among Lord Randolph Churchill's enterprises at the India Office came the conquest and annexation of Burma. When Lord Randolph Churchill had travelled in

[1] Mr. Smith to the Duke of Cambridge, October 9, 1885.

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India in the winter of 1884, he had consulted a native fortune-teller and thought it worth while to keep a note of what he said. The astrologer, after saying, perhaps ambiguously, 'that he had never seen so good a star since Lord Mayo's' (for during his Viceroyalty Lord Mayo was assassinated in the Andaman Islands), repeatedly asserted that his visitor would 'return to India shortly in connection with a warlike expedition,' and that he was 'about to go on a warlike expedition.' The prediction may perhaps in a sense have come more nearly true than many others of its class. When the Conservatives came into power, the British administration in Burma was confined to the maritime province at the mouth of the Irrawadi and the strip of sea-coast bordering on the Bay of Bengal. The inland country up to the confines of China still remained an independent State under its native ruler, the King of Ava. The relations of the British Government with that State had long been unsatisfactory. By the Treaty of Yandaboo, which terminated the first Burmese War in 1826, the right of a British representative to reside at Mandalay had been secured, and until 1876 this agent of the Imperial Government had from time to time — sitting on the ground and barefooted, according to the inflexible ceremonial of the Burmese Court — endeavoured, with small success, to safeguard the ever-growing commercial interests of British and British-Indian subjects.

In 1878 the old King of Burma died, leaving behind him thirty sons with families on the same

generous scale. A palace intrigue secured the throne to Prince Theebaw and the new reign was inaugurated by an indiscriminate massacre of the late King's other sons, with their mothers, wives and children. Eight cart-loads of butchered princes of the blood were cast, according to custom, into the river. The less honourable sepulchre of a capacious pit within the gaol was accorded to their dependents. Two of the thirty sons had had the prudence to take refuge with the British Resident, who not only stoutly refused to surrender them but addressed a strong remonstrance to the Burmese Government. The Burmese Minister for Foreign Affairs replied tartly that the procedure followed was in accordance with precedent and that under the existing treaties of 'grand friendship' the two great Powers were bound to respect each other's customs. With this answer the Government of India were forced to be content, though Ministers at home seem to have had some difficulty in persuading Queen Victoria to sign the necessary message of cousinly congratulation to the new monarch. 1885 ÆT. 36

The unpleasant feelings which had been aroused were not readily allayed. Since 1876 the British representative had been instructed not to sit upon the ground barefooted when enjoying the honour of a royal audience but to sit upon a chair, clothed in the ordinary manner. The etiquette of the Burmese Court could not, however, be relaxed. The King refused to countenance the innovation and all direct access to the Sovereign ceased. Forced now to

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deal only with the Ministers of State, the British representative found his personal influence vanishing and his personal safety impaired. For nearly a year the British Residency remained guarded by a scanty escort, wholly indefensible in itself, within a mile of the palace where 'the ignorant, arrogant, drunken boy-king, surrounded by a set of parvenu sycophants, the men of massacre and bloodshed, ignorant and savage enough to urge him on to any further atrocities,'[1] disposed of a body of two thousand soldiers. It was therefore decided in 1879 to recall the whole Residency and the Government of India, whose patience was inexhaustible, were left without a representative at the Burmese capital.

For the next five years disorder and misgovernment gripped the land of Upper Burma. In 1883 a hideous massacre was perpetrated upon three hundred prisoners in the gaol. Outrages upon British subjects and upon British vessels on the Irrawadi were frequent. The protests of the Viceroy were treated with disdain. Innumerable vexations arose. Trade was strangled. The life and property of a large European-Indian community were insecure. So threatening was the Burmese attitude that a considerable addition, involving much expense, had to be made in the garrison of the maritime province, and this necessary precaution aggravated the prevailing uncertainty. To complete the tale of grievances, Burmese Missions were found in March 1885 to be negotiating treaties of commerce in various foreign

[1] Official memorandum.

capitals. Such was the situation when Lord Randolph Churchill became Secretary of State. 1885 Æt. 36

Events were now to force a crisis. The Burmese Mission had already negotiated in Paris a Franco-Burmese Convention. The French Consul at Mandalay, an energetic man, had acquired great authority. French influence was rapidly becoming predominant and ousting British interests, both diplomatic and commercial. Banks, railways, mining and timber concessions were falling almost daily into their hands. The long procession of facts which advanced upon the British Government in July 1885, left no room to doubt the imminence of a dominant foreign influence in Upper Burma, involving the most serious and far-reaching consequences to the British province of Lower Burma and to the Indian Empire. The whole question at once became urgent.

While these considerations were causing Her Majesty's Government the utmost anxiety, a lucky incident occurred. King Theebaw, partly from want of money, partly in a spirit of sheer bravado, imposed a fine of 29 lacs of rupees upon an important British company trading in his dominions, on a pretext that certain Customs duties had not been paid, and with the intention of ruining the company and transferring their concession to a French firm. With this final and definite provocation Lord Randolph Churchill considered the case for action complete both as regards Parliament and the country. He threw himself into the enterprise with characteristic vigour. The official papers show on almost every

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page the driving power which he exerted. As early as July 25 he drew Lord Salisbury's attention to the rumours of a new Franco-Burmese Convention. Lord Salisbury's reply was terse: 'The telegram, if not à *canard*, is painfully important. The King of Burma must not be allowed to conclude any such convention.' Unofficial remonstrances having produced no effect, Lord Randolph addressed the Foreign Office formally on August 28, urging that a communication should be made to the French Government stating that any further prosecution of the commercial projects in contemplation 'will necessitate such prompt and decided measures as may most effectually satisfy the paramount rights of India in the Indo-Chinese Peninsula.' The French Government recognised frankly that the British interest in Burma was much more intimate and substantial than their own. Their Ministers temporised politely and deprecated, while they did not arrest, the activities of the Consul.

Meanwhile King Theebaw, in his great unwisdom, rejected almost insolently the remonstrances of the Government of India and their proposal that the case should be referred to arbitration. On October 16, therefore, Lord Dufferin transmitted to the India Office the draft of an ultimatum insisting that a special envoy of the British Government should be received at Mandalay to settle outstanding disputes and that a British Resident, suitably guarded, should be permanently admitted, without being forced to submit to any humiliating ceremony, to the Court

of Ava. It was further intimated to King Theebaw that he would be required in future to accept the same position in regard to his foreign relations as the Amir of Kabul and to regulate them in accordance with British advice. Lord Randolph Churchill, in approving the despatch of the ultimatum, telegraphed as follows: — 1885 ÆT. 36

The terms of your ultimatum are approved. But I am strongly of opinion that its despatch should be concurrent with movement of troops and ships to Rangoon. If ultimatum is rejected, the advance on Mandalay ought to be immediate. On the other hand, armed demonstration might bring Burmese to their senses. Also, on account of security of many British subjects and Europeans in Upper Burma, it is of vital importance that Burmese should feel that any injury to them or their property would be followed by rapid punishment. Under all the circumstances of the case, and in view of public opinion here, I do not think that considerations of expense should deter you from these precautions. Lord Salisbury concurs. I would suggest that you should demand an answer within a specified time.

Overwhelming force was employed. An expedition, consisting of a naval brigade of 433 seamen and marines, with 49 guns and machine-guns, and 3,029 British and 6,005 native soldiers, with 28 guns, was ordered to assemble, together with a flotilla, at Thyetmyo by November 14, under command of General Prendergast, with Colonel White (afterwards Sir George White) and Colonel Norman as Brigadiers. These troops were collected swiftly and unostentatiously. No sufficient reply having been received by the appointed date — November 10 — General

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Prendergast was ordered to advance. The strength of the force employed, prevented any effectual opposition in Burma. Its rapid movement allowed no time for serious complications to develop either with France or China. The Burmese army was routed at Minhla on November 17, at a cost of one officer and three men killed and five officers and twenty-four men wounded. On the 27th Mandalay was occupied and King Theebaw was a prisoner. Injuries and embarrassments tolerated for fifty years were swept away in a fortnight. General Prendergast's advance was pressed forward to Bhamo, on the Chinese frontier, which was soon occupied without any serious fighting.

Although a sporadic resistance — euphemistically termed 'dacoity' — disturbed the less accessible regions for several years, Burma was now in British hands. What was to be done with it? Lord Randolph Churchill was for annexation simple and direct. The Council of the Governor-General disapproved of this course, which they feared would excite the hostility of China. Many important authorities preferred the establishment of a native prince under British advice. Lord Salisbury thought the great cost of British administration would overweight the new territory. In the end, however, the Secretary of State for India prevailed. The Chinese Government was reassured by the abandonment of Lord Randolph Churchill's projected mission to establish commercial relations between India and Thibet, to which they had been persuaded to give a rather reluctant consent. They

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were soothed and even gratified by the establishment of a Llama in Burma — 'a spiritual king sending decennial presents,' as Lord Salisbury with relish describes him, 'though,' he adds, 'the Chinese Empire is no more Buddhist than Chartist.' The annexation was resolved. Lord Randolph arranged that the proclamation should be made on January 1, 1886, as 'a New Year's present to the Queen.' On the last day in December he was staying with Fitz-Gibbon for his Christmas party; and as the clock struck midnight he lifted his glass and announced, with due solemnity, 'Howth annexes Burma to the British Empire.' The next morning the Viceregal proclamation was published. It is one of the shortest documents of the kind on historical record: —

By command of the Queen-Empress, it is hereby notified that the territories formerly governed by King Theebaw will no longer be under his rule, but have become part of Her Majesty's dominions, and will during Her Majesty's pleasure be administered by such officers as the Viceroy and Governor-General of India may from time to time appoint.

APPENDICES

I

THREE ELECTION ADDRESSES

1874.

To the Electors of Woodstock.

I GLADLY avail myself of the opportunity afforded me by the retirement of your late member, Mr. Barnett, to offer myself as your representative in the coming Parliament.

The politics I profess are strictly in accordance with those of the great leaders of the Conservative party which the Borough of Woodstock has now so long supported.

Many questions of great political importance which formerly divided the Conservative from the Liberal party have passed for the present out of the field of conflict; their settlement, whether for good or evil, being now stamped on the face of our Statute Book. The essential features of the Constitution of this country continue, however, to defy the attacks of extreme Reformers. All legislation should, in my opinion, be based strictly on the outlines of these features, which are capable of being developed and expanded in accordance with the demands of a progressive age.

Any measures that would ameliorate the condition of the working classes would ensure my best and most earnest assistance. My desire would be to place at their disposal, if it were possible, the common necessaries and comforts of life free from the prohibitory impost of taxation.

Some reforms of the systems of rating and local taxation are much required. This subject, however, I hold to be one which should be dealt with largely in one comprehensive

measure, and not piecemeal or by small instalments after the manner of recent futile attempts.

Legislation tending to the severance of the Established Church from the State would be vigorously opposed by me. On the other hand, measures which would increase the great sphere of usefulness of the Church of England and render her more and more the Church of the nation, I would as vigorously support.

With regard to Foreign Policy, it is impossible to blind oneself to the fact that the position of England among foreign nations has deteriorated in the hands of the recent Liberal Administration. While deprecating unnecessary interference in Continental affairs, I am of opinion that in cases where the honour of our country is implicated, the security of the nation can only be attained by a bold and uncompromising policy. To that end I should oppose any large reduction of our naval and military establishments. An economical policy might, however, be consistently pursued, and the efficiency of our forces by land and sea completely secured, without the enormous charges now laid upon the country.

The Colonial Empire of Great Britain, offering as it does a field of development for the talent, energy and labour of the sons of our overburdened island, will continually demand the attention of the Legislature. I would support all efforts which would tend to facilitate the means of emigration, and would at the same time strengthen and consolidate the ties which unite the Colonies with the mother country.

With regard to education, both in this country and in Ireland, I am of opinion that the existing means are capable of a large and liberal development, and that while the rights of conscience should be most sacredly respected, religious teaching should not wholly be forgotten.

The Education Act of 1871 has, on the whole, successfully settled the question and opened the doors of knowledge to all our countrymen without regard to sect. I agree with the spirit of that Act, but any alterations that may be needful

to ensure its more perfect working will always receive my best consideration.

The principles of true Conservatism I hold to be those of gradual, unceasing progress, adhering strictly to the lines of a well-founded Constitution and avoiding all violent and unnecessary changes. It is in these principles, in which I firmly believe myself, that I aspire in hopeful confidence to become the Representative of the Electors of the Borough of Woodstock.

Should I be so fortunate as to be successful in gaining your confidence, I can safely promise that the interests of the Borough will not suffer from any neglect at my hands, and the wishes and views of every individual member of the constituency, of whatever political party, will always receive my best and most earnest attention.

I have the honour to be, Gentlemen,

Yours very faithfully,

RANDOLPH S. CHURCHILL.

Woodstock, January 26, 1874.

1880.

To the Electors of Woodstock.

Parliament is about to be dissolved, and I venture again to solicit a renewal of your confidence, which for six years I have enjoyed.

When in 1874 you did me the honour to return me as your representative to the House of Commons, I pledged myself to give a general support to the policy and the principles of the Conservative party.

And now that I again offer myself as a candidate for the Borough I confidently appeal to you on the same grounds, renewing my former pledges.

The attention of the Parliament which is about to expire has been chiefly occupied by momentous questions of Foreign Policy involving almost the existence of the Empire.

Her Majesty's Government have had to contend not only against the dangerous ambition of a great Foreign Power

but also against a determined and powerfully-led Opposition at home.

By repeated and unusually large majorities the policy which the Government pursued has been sanctioned by Parliament. A few weeks will surely demonstrate that it has been approved by the country.

In giving a consistent support to that policy I am convinced that I have been carrying out the wishes of a vast majority of this constituency, and I believe that the safety of this Empire can only be secured by a firm adherence on the part of the country to the course pursued by the present advisers of the Crown.

To their credit it may be stated that they have hitherto achieved the great result of 'peace with honour' without having added perceptibly to the burdens imposed upon the people by taxation.

My opinions on domestic matters have been more than once stated to you during the six years which have elapsed since my election in 1874. The Conservative party have been instrumental in placing on the Statute Book many comprehensive and useful measures. I would instance the Act to Consolidate and Amend the Law relating to Friendly Societies; the Artisans' and Labourers' Dwellings Act; the Act Consolidating and Extending the various Laws relating to the Sanitary Condition of the People; the Act for Modifying and Improving according to Modern Experience the Regulations affecting the Discipline and Control of our Army; and other Statutes which I need not now particularise.

Her Majesty's Government have now in hand carefully considered measures for the consolidation of the Criminal Code, and for the improvement of the Law of Bankruptcy; also three most important measures relating to the settlement of landed estates, enlarging the powers of life owners and reducing the cost of land transfer, to which, as you may imagine from my remarks to you in the autumn, I shall be prepared, if you return me as your Member, to give a most cordial support.

The present condition of Ireland must be a cause of uneasiness to every thoughtful person and will no doubt occupy the anxious consideration of the new Parliament.

The party led by Mr. Parnell, which has for its object the disintegration of the United Kingdom, must, in my opinion, be resisted at all costs.

At the same time, I do not see how the internal peace of Ireland can be permanently secured without a judicious reconsideration of the laws affecting the tenure of land; and should measures with that object be introduced by her Majesty's Government, I shall be inclined to give them an unprejudiced support.

It must not be forgotten that the successful and wise solution of the difficulties surrounding the question of Irish education effected by ministers and the Conservative party will greatly contribute to the rapid progress of a future prosperity of the sister Island.

I am in favour of the present system of County Government by Quarter Sessions, but I think that the hands of the magistrates might be strengthened by the addition of elected representatives of the ratepayers.

The contribution from the Imperial revenue to the expenses of Local Government, which was the work of the Conservative party, has no doubt proved a boon to the agricultural community. I should be glad to see this principle further carried out by throwing a portion of the cost of maintenance of highways upon the moneys annually voted by Parliament.

To secure the freedom and to encourage the enterprise of the tenant farmer, it would be expedient to abolish the Law of Distress in its present form.

It appears to me that all matters dealt with by that law should be a subject of agreement between landlord and tenant.

I shall heartily co-operate with any party which brings forward carefully considered measures for the amelioration of the condition of the agricultural labourer, and I think it

would be well if powers were given to municipalities and local bodies for the purchase of land to be let in allotments and for the improvement of the dwellings of this valuable class of men.

Trusting that the principles above enunciated will commend themselves to your consideration and will secure your approval,

I have the honour to remain,

Very faithfully yours,

RANDOLPH S. CHURCHILL.

Woodstock, March 9, 1880.

1885.

To the Electors of Birmingham.

The time is near when you will be called upon to express your judgment on the past and your desires for the future. Two schools of political thought strive against each other to win your confidence. The one, composed of those who, having had under their complete control the Government of the Empire from May 1880 until June 1885, are unable to justify their claims upon you by any record of foreign or colonial or home achievement, but, contenting themselves with incomplete and misleading extenuation of acknowledged failure, seek to attract you by a renewal of promises, and even bribes, which bitter experience has shown they have neither the capacity nor the strength to fulfil. The other, whose views I share, and whose policy I will endeavour soon, as best I may, personally to uphold among you, appeals to the electoral body in Great Britain and Ireland to confirm the adverse judgment pronounced on June 9, against Mr. Gladstone's Administration by the Parliament which in a few weeks will be dissolved. That judgment, striking and wide-reaching as it was in its immediate results, was literally wrung from a House of Commons the majority of which would have been only too glad to have continued their support of Mr. Gladstone had it not been for the irresistible influence of popular discontent, excited by various causes — Irish

troubles, Colonial losses, Indian dangers, costly wars, fruitless sacrifices of many heroes, financial excesses, Parliamentary impotence, imperilled industries, commercial and agricultural depression growing greater and more alarming year by year. All this was expressed by the action of the House of Commons on June 9. Mr. Gladstone's Government, the author of these many and long-continued disasters, fell; that Government in 1880 so popular, so powerful, with such immeasurable opportunities for promoting the peace, progress and prosperity of the people, fell, and not a voice was raised, either in Parliament or the country, of sympathy for the vanquished or of mourning over their fall. Mr. Bright will request of you to contribute to restore to power that most unlucky Administration. To this end will be directed all the powers of his unrivalled oratory, his simple but forcible invective, his personal position and experience. But very little of patriotism, very little of self-interest, very little of recollection, reflection and calculation will compel you to remain outside the influence of that persuasive voice. The British Empire is great and powerful from the character of its people, the extent of its dominions and the varied nature of its resources. More than all other Western nations, we can afford to indulge ourselves in experiment and, indeed, caprice, as regards our system of Government or the direction of our Home and Imperial policy. But there are limits even to the strength of the British Empire, and a repetition of the policy of the last five years will, without doubt, transgress those limits. Yet such will be the inevitable consequence of a restoration to office of the Liberal party, as that party is at present constituted. The old divisions, the irreconcilable differences, personal and political, which all the ascendency of Mr. Gladstone was unable to compose, much less conceal, while he was Prime Minister, which were the chief cause of the failure of his Administration, are now blazing forth most fiercely, and Mr. Gladstone, with all honesty, warns you that his controlling hand will be stretched forth only for a little

time. To this party, which even hatred of the Tories cannot decently unite, which comes before you with such a past, you will be asked to commit for another six years perchance the destinies of the Empire. You cannot yield to this appeal.

The policy of the Tory party is before you: — To regain the friendship of the European Powers which prejudice, presumption and poltroonery had all but forfeited; and to use that friendship so as to maintain effectually the united European action by which alone the peace and the liberties of the peoples of the Continent and of these islands can be secured and developed; to evolve from the region of sentiment such forces as may enable the mother country to tighten the bonds of union between herself and our colonies and to rear on a practical and permanent basis, for defensive and commercial purposes, that Imperial federation of the subjects of the Queen which many wise and far-seeing minds regard as essential to the perpetuation of our power; to conciliate by equal laws and by just and firm administration our Irish brethren, now much irritated and estranged, so that the Union which Nature, as well as policy, has effected may for all time endure; to place, by material provisions and constructions, the security of our Indian dependency beyond the influence of panic, alarm or even anxiety, and simultaneously, by careful Parliamentary inquiry, to ascertain how we may most safely and most speedily bring to the strengthening of our Government all that is high and good of the traditions, the intellects and the aspirations of the native races; to give to our rural and agricultural population that machinery of self-government which has been of advantage to our great towns; to strive, as far as the laws of political economy may permit, to multiply the number of freeholders and occupiers; to utilise the powers of the House of Commons, in recent years almost forgotten, so as either to effect financial retrenchment and departmental reform, or else to make sure that the present expenditure of the people's money is justifiable

and thrifty; to develop still further the efficiency of Parliament by alterations in its methods of transacting business and in its hours of labour; to restore public confidence; to revive commercial enterprise by a patient continuance of good and prudent administration; in a word, to govern the British Empire by the light of common sense. That is the policy of the Tory party.

Measures are now recommended to you by our opponents which the Tory party will not only not attempt to carry out, but which I hope and believe they will always resolutely oppose. They are the dismemberment of the Empire, under the guise of National Councils, the abolition of the House of Lords, the disestablishment of the Church and the appropriation of its endowments to the support of irreligious education, the compulsory acquisition by local bodies of landed estates for the purposes of arbitrary division, the wholesale plunder of all who have acquired properties, great or small, by thrift or by inheritance, under the names of 'ransom' and of 'graduated taxation.' These and other similar projects, if they are decided by the nation to be wise and prudent, I freely admit must be confided to the hands of Mr. Chamberlain and his friends. I will have none of them, for I know that they mean political chaos and social ruin.

Such, gentlemen, are to my mind the circumstances of the time, as far as they can be conveniently and concisely summarised in an election address. No one can be more convinced than I am that I should be guilty of intolerable presumption if I based my candidature for the Central Division of Birmingham on any other ground than the truth of the political principles I have endeavoured in this document to set forth; moreover, I am profoundly aware that from many causes, some of them physical, I have feebly and inadequately served in the House of Commons. My opponent has the immense advantage of long-established possession, amounting in the minds of some almost to prescriptive right; he is further supported by a highly (perhaps

too highly) finished political organisation. But the experience of the past and the essential truth of the principles which I will endeavour to sustain may, in all probability, outweigh these considerable forces. The people, in the widest acceptance of the expression, are now, for the first time in the history of England, called upon to decide and define their future. If they are guided by reflection and by knowledge they cannot err. But if, unmindful of the last five years, they recur, like the constituencies in 1880, for government and for policy to those who have so misled them and betrayed them, I, in common with the party with which for twelve years I have acted, will patiently accept their judgment; but history will mourn and will wonder long at the blindness and the folly, ay, even the insanity, of a people who, called to the more free and perfect enjoyment of their ancient liberties, deliberately and in spite of warnings writ large and full, flung away a priceless heritage, and consigned to the grave of the past a great and glorious Empire.

I am your obedient servant,

Randolph S. Churchill.

India Office, St. James's Park:
October 10.

II

FURTHER CORRESPONDENCE RELATING TO THE NATIONAL UNION OF CONSERVATIVE ASSOCIATIONS

1884.

The Marquess of Salisbury to Lord Randolph Churchill.

Private. Hatfield: April 1, 1884.

My Lord, — I had the honour of receiving a letter from you, dated the 19th ult., in which, on behalf of the Organisation Committee of the National Union, you requested that Sir Stafford Northcote and myself would give our early consideration to a report and other documents which you enclosed.

We had already expressed our disapproval of the report; therefore, in the absence of any explanation, we could not have entered further upon the consideration of it. We had the advantage, however, of a conference with yourself and Mr. Gorst, in which some passages of the report, which seemed to us objectionable, were explained. It was made clear to us that there was no intention on the part of the Council of the National Union either to trench on the province of the Central Committee or to take any course upon political questions that would not be acceptable to the leaders of the party. The 'large and general principles of party policy' reserved for the determination of the Council by the fourth recommendation of the report were explained to refer exclusively to questions affecting the organisation of the affiliated Associations.

It was very satisfactory to us to find from your language

that the Council were at one with us in the conviction that harmonious co-operation between them and the Central Committee was of great importance to the interests of the party, and that the matters which have hitherto been disposed of by the leaders and Whips of the party must remain as heretofore in their hands, including the expenditure of the funds standing in the name of the Central Committee.

It was thought desirable that, in place of further discussing the report, Sir Stafford Northcote and I should indicate with more precision the objects to which the efforts of the Council may with the greatest advantage be directed. It appears to us that these objects may be defined to be the same as those for which the Associations themselves are working. The chief object for which the Associations exist is to keep alive and extend Conservative convictions, and so to increase the number of Conservative voters. This is done by acting on opinion through various channels, by the establishment of clubs, by holding meetings, by securing the assistance of speakers and lecturers and by the circulation of printed matter in defence of Conservative opinions, by collecting the facts required for the use of Conservative speakers and writers, and by the invigoration of the local press.

In all these efforts it is the function of the Council of the National Union to aid, stimulate and guide the Associations it represents.

Much valuable work may also be done through the Associations, by watching the registration and, at election time, by providing volunteer canvassers and volunteer conveyance. But in respect to these matters it is desirable that the National Union should act only in concert with the Central Committee, because there are in many constituencies other bodies of Conservatives who do not belong to the Associations, but whose co-operation must be secured.

To ensure complete unity of action, we think it desirable that the Whips of the party should sit, *ex officio*, on the Council, and should have a right to be present at the meetings of all Committees. Such an arrangement would be a

security against any unintentional divergencies of policy and would lend weight to the proceedings of the Union. Business relating to candidates should remain entirely with the Central Committee. On the assumption, which we are entitled now to make, that the action of the two bodies will be harmonious, a separation of establishments will not be necessary — unless business should largely increase. There is some advantage, undoubtedly, in their working under a common roof, for it is difficult to distinguish between their functions so accurately but that the need of mutual assistance and communication will constantly be felt. I have the honour to be

Your obedient servant,
SALISBURY.

Lord Randolph Churchill to the Marquess of Salisbury.

The National Union of Conservative and Constitutional Associations, St. Stephen's Chambers, Westminster S.W.: April 3, 1884.

My Lord, — I have laid your letter of the 1st inst., in which you indicate your reconsidered views and those of Sir Stafford Northcote concerning the position and functions of the National Union of Conservative Associations, before the Organisation Committee. It is quite clear to us that in the letters we have from time to time addressed to you and in the conversations which we have had the honour of holding with you on this subject, we have hopelessly failed to convey to your mind anything like an appreciation either of the significance of the movement which the National Union commenced at Birmingham in October last or of the unfortunate effect which a neglect or a repression of that movement by the leaders of the party would have upon the Conservative cause. The resolution of the Conference at Birmingham in October — a Conference attended by upwards of 450 delegates from all parts of the country — directed the Council of the National Union to take steps to secure for that body its legitimate share in the management of the party organisation. This was an expression of dissatisfaction with the condition

of the organisation of the party and of a determination on the part of the National Union that it should no longer continue to be a sham, useless and hardly even an ornamental portion of that organisation.

The resolution signified that the old methods of party organisation — namely, the control of Parliamentary elections by the Leader, the Whip, the paid agent, drawing their resources from secret funds — which were suitable to the manipulation of the 10*l.* householder were utterly obsolete and would not secure the confidence of the masses of the people who were enfranchised by Mr. Disraeli's Reform Bill, and that the time had arrived when the centre of organising energy should be an elected, representative and responsible body. The delegates at the Conference were evidently of opinion that if the principles of the Conservative party were to obtain popular support, the organisation of the party would have to become an imitation, thoroughly real and *bonâ fide* in its nature, of that popular form of representative organisation which had contributed so greatly to the triumph of the Liberal party in 1880 and which was best known to the public by the name of the Birmingham Caucus. The Caucus may be perhaps a name of evil sound and omen in the ears of the aristocratic or privileged classes, but it is undeniably the only form of political organisation which can collect, guide and control for common objects large masses of electors; and there is nothing in this particular form of political combination which is in the least repugnant to the working classes in this country. The newly-elected Council of the National Union proceeded to communicate these views to your Lordship and Sir Stafford Northcote, and invited the assistance of your experience and authority to enable them to satisfy the direction which had been imposed upon them by the delegates.

It appeared at first from a letter which we had the honour of receiving from you on February 29 that your Lordship and Sir Stafford Northcote entered fully and sympathetically into the wishes of the Council, in which

letter it was distinctly stated that it was the duty of the Council —

1. To superintend and stimulate the exertions of the local Associations.

2. To furnish them with advice and in some measure with funds.

3. To provide lecturers on political topics for public meetings.

4. To aid them in the improvement and development of the local press.

5. To help them in perfecting the machinery for registration and volunteer agency at election time.

6. To press upon the local Associations the paramount duty of a timely selection of candidates for the House of Commons.

Nothing could have been clearer, more definite or satisfactory than this scheme of labour; and accompanied as it was by observations of a flattering character concerning the constitution of the National Union, the Council was greatly gratified and encouraged by its reception.

The Council, however, committed the serious error of imagining that your Lordship and Sir Stafford Northcote were in earnest in wishing them to become a real source of usefulness to the party, and proceeded to adopt a report presented to them by us, in which practical effect was given to the advice with which the Council have been favoured, and they were under the impression that they would be placed in a position to carry out their labours successfully by being furnished with pecuniary resources from the considerable funds which your Lordship and Sir Stafford Northcote collect and administer to the general purposes of the party.

The Council have been rudely undeceived. The day after the adoption of the report, before even I had had time to communicate that report officially to your Lordship, I received a letter from Mr. Bartley, the paid Agent of the leaders, written under their direction, containing a formal

notice to the National Union to quit the premises occupied by them in conjunction with the other organising officials, accompanied by a statement that the leaders declined for the future all and any responsibility for the proceedings of the National Union.

Further, in your letter of the 1st instant you express your disapproval of the action of the Council, and decline to consider the report, on the ground that the contemplated action of the Council will trench upon the functions of an amorphous and unknown body, styled the Central Committee, in whose hands all matters hitherto disposed of by the leaders and Whips of the party must remain, including the expenditure of the party funds.

In the same letter you state that you will indicate with more precision the objects at which the Council of the National Union should aim, the result being that the precise language of your former letter of February 29 is totally abandoned, and refuge taken in vague, foggy and utterly intangible suggestions.

Finally, in order that the Council of the National Union may be completely and for ever reduced to its ancient condition of dependence upon, and servility to, certain irresponsible persons who find favour in your eyes, you demand that the Whips of the party — meaning, we suppose, Lord Skelmersdale, Lord Hawarden and Lord Hopetoun in the Lords, Mr. Rowland Winn and Mr. Thornhill in the Commons — should sit *ex officio* on the Council, with a right of being present at the meetings of all Committees.

With respect to the last demand we think it right to state, for the information of your Lordship, that under the rules and constitution of the National Union the Council have no power whatever to comply with this injunction. The Council are elected at the Annual Conference and have no power to add to their number. All that they can do is that, in the event of a vacancy occurring among the members, they have power by co-optation to fill up the vacancy.

I will admit that in conversation with your Lordship and

Sir Stafford Northcote, with a view to establishing a satisfactory connection between the Council and the leaders of the party without sacrificing the independence of the former, I unofficially suggested an arrangement — subsequently approved by this Committee — under which Mr. R. N. Fowler, one of the Treasurers of the National Union, might have been willing to resign that post, and Mr. Winn might have been elected by the Council to fill it — an arrangement widely different from the extravagant and despotic demand laid down in your letter of the 1st instant.

You further inform us that in the event of the Council — a body representing as it does upwards of 500 affiliated Conservative Associations, and composed of men eminent in position and political experience, enjoying the confidence of the party in populous localities, and sacrificing continually much time, convenience and money to the work of the National Union — acquiescing in the view of its functions laid down in your letter of April 1, it may be graciously permitted to remain the humble inmate of the premises which it at present occupies.

We shall lay your letter and copy of this reply before the Council at its meeting to-morrow and shall move the Council that they adhere substantially to the report already adopted, in obedience to the direction of the Conference at Birmingham; that they take steps to provide themselves with their own officers and clerks; and that they continue to prosecute with vigour and independence the task which they have commenced — namely, the *bonâ fide* popular organisation of the Conservative party.

It may be that the powerful and secret influences which have hitherto been unsuccessfully at work on the Council, with the knowledge and consent of your Lordship and Sir Stafford Northcote, may at last be effectual in reducing the National Union to its former make-believe and impotent condition; in that case we shall know what steps to take to clear ourselves of all responsibility for the failure of an attempt to avert the misfortunes and reverses which will, we

are certain, under the present effete system of wire-pulling and secret organisation, overtake and attend the Conservative party at a General Election.

I have the honour to be
Yours obediently,
Randolph S. Churchill.

Draft of Lord Randolph Churchill's letter resigning his candidature for Birmingham.

Dear Mr. Satchell Hopkins, — You will not be surprised, after what passed yesterday at the Council of the National Union, to receive a communication from me with reference to the electoral contest which the Conservative party in Birmingham intend to wage at the General Election, and to the part in that contest which I have been invited to take. It will be within your recollection that in last November, when you first inquired of me whether I would be willing to have my name submitted to the Conservative party in Birmingham as one of the candidates for the Parliamentary representation of the town, I hesitated greatly before complying with your very flattering request. My hesitation was not due to any great fear of defeat, but rather to doubts which I entertained as to whether the political principles, both as regards foreign and domestic affairs, which I held to and which I should advocate as candidate for Birmingham, were in any degree coincident with the political principles of the present leaders of the Tory party or would be adopted by them if they came into power. You are also aware that shortly before I went to Birmingham at Easter for the purpose of addressing public meetings at the Town Hall I again expressed to you those doubts, which had been rather confirmed than dissipated by various circumstances which had marked the interval between April and November last. It is within your knowledge that the Council of the National Union has been since its election by the Conference of Associations at

Birmingham in October 1883 engaged in a struggle to acquire for itself a large share in and control over the organisation of the Tory party throughout the country, to become the principal centre and source of organising energy, and to transform itself from a thoroughly sham and artificial into an active and powerful body. The Council in undertaking this effort was acting in obedience to the positive direction of the delegates at the Conference. The principles of political organisation which animate the Council are the encouragement, extension and formation of popular Associations combining all classes and electing a representative and responsible executive in electoral districts for the carrying-on of all business relating to Parliamentary elections. This is the form of political organisation which has been widely and successfully adopted by the Liberal party, which is the only form of political combination suitable to the present vast electorate but which as far as the Conservative party is concerned is solely confined to some of the most populous constituencies of Great Britain. I would also add that this is the only form of organisation which can bring the Parliamentary action of the Conservative party into harmony and sympathy with the masses of the people in the country who are inclined to support the principles of that party. A popular organisation and a popular policy follow naturally the one upon the other, and without the former you will not have the latter. The efforts of the Council from the outset met with the strongest opposition from those who have great influence with the leaders of the party, who at present control such organisation as exists, and dispense in irresponsible secrecy the considerable funds subscribed for party purpose.

To thwart the efforts of the Council every pretext of delay was seized upon, promises and menaces being freely resorted to. The Council, however, succeeded in procuring from the leaders a document recognising largely the legitimacy of their demands and conceding much of that which they claimed; but so soon as they embodied its substance

in a report for the purpose of immediate action, an attempt was first made to prohibit this step, and when the Council had the independence to persist, the National Union received a prompt notice to quit the premises it had so long shared with the agents of the party leaders. Thereupon the Council were careful not to communicate this hostile measure to the Associations in the country, ever hoping that a conciliatory spirit might yet avert a public rupture. Unfortunately no corresponding spirit restrained those who had been opposed to the Council. Independents in the Conservative party could not be brooked for a moment, and a circular was hurriedly issued from the Central office to every Association and agent in the country intimating that the National Union was an outcast, and that a small Committee nominated by the leaders themselves, in whose appointment the Associations had no voice, would conduct all the functions for the discharge of which the National Union was originally constituted. Notwithstanding the issue of this document, which threw local bodies and local leaders into the greatest confusion and embarrassment, the Council of the National Union continued their efforts to bring about an arrangement which, while preserving their independence and usefulness, would enable them to act harmoniously with all authorities in and sections of the party.

These efforts proved unavailing, and on the 2nd instant the majority of the Council was induced under great pressure to recede from the line of action which it had for six months adopted, and a Committee was appointed to supersede the Chairman and the Executive Committee.

The advocates of popular control on the Council were suppressed, the inchoate work of invoking energy and co-operation among the Associations was abruptly stopped, and the Council has been in effect reduced to the position of dependence and unreality from which the delegates at the Birmingham Conference had directed it to emancipate itself.

Such is the summary of the abortive effort of the National Union to infuse a popular element into the organisation and

policy of the Tory party. The jealous guardians of aristocratic privilege have proved for the time too powerful for those who would base the strength of the Tory party upon the genuine and spontaneous attachment of the masses of our people. The interests of the many are still to be sacrificed to the love of power and interested ambition of a favoured few.

These things being so, I have arrived at the irresistible conclusion that it would be impossible for me, consistently even with the lowest standard of political honesty, to solicit the suffrages of the citizens of Birmingham in support of the obsolete policy still adhered to by the Tory party; basing my solicitations upon those principles of government, whether domestic or foreign, which I endeavoured to set forth in your Town Hall at Eastertide; knowing, as I know now, beyond all doubt of contradiction, that notwithstanding the immense changes effected by the Reform Bill of 1867, and about to be effected by the Reform Bill of 1884, those principles are inexpressibly repugnant to the authorities of the party and would never be carried into effect by the Tory party under their guidance.

The malignant influences which for four years have had complete possession of the Tory party and hopelessly muddled the conduct of the Opposition, rendering us an object of derision even beyond the limits of these Islands, ought not in my opinion to be permitted to overshadow the destinies of the British people.

Caring less than nothing for results personal to myself, and using what lights I possess, what knowledge and experience I have acquired for the purpose of laying the whole truth on political matters before the public on the eve of a great national decision, I have, after much reflection and perhaps unduly prolonged self-restraint, indited to you this communication. You and your friends will surely perceive that, hampered and shackled by the animosity of those whose support is essential, and which I had a right to anticipate, it would be out of the question for me with any hopes

of honourable success to realise the aspirations of the Conservatives of Birmingham.

I remain

Yours faithfully,

Randolph S. Churchill.

Sir Henry Wolff to Mr. Harold Gorst.

28 Cadogan Place, S.W.: Jan. 5, 1903.

My dear Harold Gorst, — Only on Saturday I saw the recent number of the *Nineteenth Century*, in which was published your third article on the so-called 'Fourth Party.'

It contains two passages which I should like to see corrected.

On page 138 you write: 'Lord Randolph Churchill, on his own initiative and without consulting his colleagues, made terms for himself with Lord Salisbury.'

This statement does not accord with my recollections.

After the Sheffield conference on July 23, 1884, it appeared to me and to some other friends of Lord Randolph Churchill, that the election of a majority of his supporters on the council of the National Union placed him in a position so strong as to enable him without any misconstruction or sacrifice of dignity to negotiate with Lord Salisbury for more harmonious action. Your father was out of town, and there was no time to lose, as the election of a chairman of the Union was impending. I was therefore authorised to inquire whether Lord Salisbury would be willing to discuss certain points with Lord Randolph Churchill. The same day they met, and an agreement was come to on the following terms: —

(1) Lord Randolph Churchill and his friends were to act in harmony with Lord Salisbury, and were to be treated with full confidence by him and the ruling members of the Conservative party.

(2) Sir Michael Hicks-Beach was to be elected chairman of the National Union.

(3) The Primrose League was to be officially recognised by the leaders of the party and by the Council of the Union.

(4) In order to celebrate this concordat — as you have put it — Lord Salisbury was to give a dinner to the Council.

The conditions were carried out within a few days. Sir Michael Hicks-Beach was elected chairman and the Primrose League recognised, by resolution, at the first meeting.

As above mentioned, your father was at the time absent, but until now I had always understood that he concurred in the course taken. I had attributed his absence from the dinner to some other cause, and I the more believed in his approval of the reconciliation from the support given the next year, after conference, both by himself and Lord Randolph Churchill, to a motion made by me in the House of Commons to adjourn the third reading of the new Reform Bill during the interregnum between the resignation of Mr. Gladstone and the accession of Lord Salisbury. This motion is, I think, referred to by Sir Herbert Maxwell in his 'Life of Mr. W. H. Smith.'

I had regretted in later years to perceive that there was some tension between your father and Lord Randolph Churchill; but, through ignorance, I had imputed it to disagreements on the formation of Lord Salisbury's second Administration in 1886, when I was absent from England.

The second passage which, to my mind, requires explanation occurs on page 140. It runs thus: —

'But no member of the Fourth Party, except himself (Lord R. C.), was admitted to the Cabinet. Mr. Balfour, though made President of the Local Government Board, was excluded from the latter distinction.'

I have always understood that at the time Lord Randolph Churchill not only advised, but urged the admission of Mr. Balfour to the Cabinet; and that this advice was not followed on account of Lord Salisbury's reluctance to give to a near kinsman an advancement to which others might think they had greater claim.

Yours very truly,

H. Drummond Wolff.

III

REFORM BILL, 1884

Lord Randolph Churchill to H. H. Wainwright, Esq., M.P.

2 Connaught Place, W.: June 9, 1884.

My dear Mr. Wainwright, — You tell me in your letter of the 30th ult. that you find some difficulty in understanding my recent action in the House of Commons with respect to the Reform Bill.

The position of the Conservative party on the question of Parliamentary Reform ever since 1887 has been very ill-defined. The action taken at that time by Mr. Disraeli and his colleagues made it impossible for the Conservative party at any future date to oppose on principle large extensions of the franchise. That this result was clearly perceived by the authors of the Reform Bill of 1867 is proved by the fact that in no single speech of Mr. Disraeli or of Sir Stafford Northcote on the question of Parliamentary Reform can any trace be found of opposition to assimilation of county and borough suffrage on principle. The old Tory attitude of 1832 has been for ever abandoned. I think, if you refer to Mr. Disraeli's address to the Buckinghamshire electors in 1874, you will find a passage clearly intimating that he himself was prepared, if necessary, to supplement his work of 1867 by doing what Mr. Gladstone is at present engaged on. If these facts had any meaning at all they meant this — that extension of the franchise was no longer a monopoly of the Liberal party, and was not attended by any danger to the Constitution.

Lancashire, which is usually in the van of the Conservative party in Great Britain, was quick to detect the change.

When I went to Oldham and to Manchester in the autumn and winter of 1881 for the purpose of addressing public meetings I was particularly enjoined by the leading gentlemen in those places not to say a word against the assimilation of the county and borough franchise. During the sessions of 1880–81, 1881–82, 1882–83, the question of Parliamentary Reform was permitted to remain in a dormant state, and the position of both parties with regard to it was to no inconsiderable extent forgotten.

Suddenly in the autumn of 1883 it was rumoured that Parliament would be called upon to deal with the question; the recess oratory of Ministers and their followers confirmed the intelligence; the Conservative leaders were singularly reticent of their opinions, and I found myself (then, as now, a mere member of the rank and file of the party) obliged to go at length into this question of Reform before an Edinburgh audience without having at my command any certain indication as to the course which the Conservative party would pursue. As the representative of a small agricultural borough which any new Reform Bill must extinguish I could not be expected to look upon the measure with any very longing eye; further, in accordance with the maxim that it was the duty of the Opposition to oppose, I considered that it would be right and reasonable for Conservatives to resist the proposed Reform Bill on the ground of (1) the inopportuneness of the moment chosen and the far more urgent character of other questions; (2) the obvious risk of any large addition to the Irish electorate; (3) the transparent design of the Government to divert public attention from foreign affairs; (4) the absence of any indication, on the part of the unenfranchised masses, of any great desire for the voting privilege. On those grounds at Edinburgh I spoke against Reform; but I perceived that my views, though listened to with kindness and courtesy, were not highly acceptable to the intelligent audience of Scotch artisans which I was addressing, and moreover the disagreement with those views which was expressed from the platform by Mr. Balfour, M.P.,

and Lord Elcho, M.P., voiced unmistakenly the prevalent opinion of the meeting.

In the ensuing period, before the opening of Parliament, I ascertained by communications with members of the party at the Carlton that no unanimity of feeling on the subject of Parliamentary Reform existed; that many borough members, and particularly Lancashire members, were positively in favour of the change; and that direct opposition on principle was only to be expected from a highly influential but numerically small circle of members representing county and borough constituencies exclusively of a rural character.

Under these circumstances, after Parliament had met, and after the Opposition had failed to overthrow the Government on the Egyptian policy, and the Reform Bill had been introduced, I proposed on the second reading of the Bill to move the previous question — a form of opposition which appeared to combine most of the objections which I had stated at Edinburgh, while not committing anyone who might support it to resistance to Reform on principle. Sir Stafford Northcote requested me not to persevere with this motion, which had precedence over the amendment of Lord John Manners, and it was accordingly removed from the paper. Now Lord John Manners' motion, if it meant anything at all (and on this I am not prepared positively to decide), meant that the Conservative party was prepared to deal with extension of the franchise, provided that the measure was accompanied by provisions for the redistribution of seats. Yet even this modified form of resistance did not secure the support of the entire Conservative party, and was defeated by the overwhelming majority of 130. Finally, on the motion to go into Committee, Mr. Chaplin's proposal to exclude Ireland from the Bill met with so little favour from the leaders of our party that he wisely declined to press it to a division.

These things being so, I am sanguine that all impartial persons will agree that a frank and open departure from the position of strong resistance to Reform which I had taken up in December was not only pardonable but incumbent

upon any practical politician. Had that position been the position of the Conservative party generally, I would certainly have adhered to it at any sacrifice; but, far from that, it was not even the position of any considerable section of the party, who as a body recurred to the policy of Mr. Disraeli. Moreover, since December I had by the favour of the Conservatives in Birmingham become a candidate for the Parliamentary representation of that immense constituency, and undoubtedly in Birmingham there existed no serious differences between Liberals and Conservatives as to the propriety of the assimilation of the county and borough franchise. Having thus been guided to the conclusion that Reform was inevitable, and that equality of political rights between England and Ireland was to govern the Conservatives as well as the Liberals, I did not conceal my change of mind from the House of Commons or the public. It appeared to me to be as reasonable and intelligible a change of mind as it could be possible for any M.P. to undergo; brought about not by one short debate, as has been most erroneously asserted, but by a careful study of a continued succession of circumstances extending over a period of four months. I am sure that it is well for our public life that a change of opinion on any great question, should it take place, should be frankly and fearlessly avowed; and I believe that violent censure of such a change, if generally adopted, would tend to produce hypocrisy and political dishonesty: and possessed by that idea I do not now hesitate to remark that if the Government were to give a definite guarantee to Parliament that their Reform legislation should not be operative until the redistribution of seats has been provided for, by the announcement that Parliament will be called together in the autumn to complete the scheme, and by the insertion of a proper date in the present Bill before which no election shall take place under it, then I see no strong or overwhelming reason why the labours of the present session should be rendered abortive by the rejection of the Bill for the representation of the people.

IV

LORD RANDOLPH CHURCHILL'S LETTERS FROM INDIA

To his Wife.

S.S. *Rohilla*: December 13, 1884.

We had a very enjoyable day yesterday at Malta; the steamer dropped anchor at 9.30, and greatly to my surprise the Governor, Sir Lintorn Simmons, whom I did not know, sent his barge and an aide-de-camp to fetch me off and take me to the Palace. I had a long interview with the Governor, who was most polite and agreeable. He was very gloomy about Wolseley's expedition and generally about the Army, Navy, fortifications, &c.; and as he is considered one of our greatest authorities, I suppose he is right as to the unsatisfactory condition of everything. But they want such a lot of money!

He showed me all over the Palace, which would have delighted you; it is one of the finest buildings I ever saw. His sitting-room used to be the Grand Master's bedroom, and the whole place is in much the same condition as it was 300 years ago. The tapestries exceed in beauty any I ever saw. After we had seen the great church, a magnificent edifice, Lord John Hay gave us his barge to go round the dockyard, which fortunately happened to be full of ships. We went over the *Dreadnought* and *Inflexible*, and on the latter enjoyed the pleasure of moving the turrets and 80-ton guns with just the same ease as one winds up one's watch — the whole thing very wonderful, very complicated and perfectly unintelligible, and all the more interesting on that account.

At 1.30 luncheon with the Governor; large party; Admiral Tryon and Lord Elphinstone, going out to Australia,

Lord John Hay and others. We returned on board in the Governor's barge in great state, the object of admiration and envy of the other passengers.

At five o'clock the ship started again for Port Said, where we hope to arrive Tuesday night. The weather keeps very fine. To-day (Sunday) muster of the crew at 10.30: 120 Lascars, Negroes, Turks, heretics and infidels; curious objects. After that, church in the saloon, the chief merit of which was its brevity. The ubiquitous parson, of course, presided, and gave us a silly address on the dislike the clergy felt for the laity and *vice versâ*, and several silly reasons for same. I thought if the clergy are like him the whole thing was very easily accounted for, but have not yet communicated to him this suggestion.

They are talking of getting up some theatricals and concerts; I hope they won't. The two junior officers on board are very cheery fellows, and give smoking concerts in their cabin, which is about 6 ft. square, and which seats comfortably about a dozen persons, smoking, drinking whiskey-and-water and singing choruses. I have twice attended these concerts, which are of a very cheerful character; and so wonderful is the sea air that though the concert-room atmosphere might be cut with a knife and the whiskey is copiously supplied, one feels rather the better than the worse for it the next morning.

I saw the *Morning Post* of the 4th at Malta with Borthwick's valedictory article; the article is so very friendly that I fear people will think I wrote it myself.

December 18.

Here we are in the Canal, which is very much what I expected; a dirty ditch with nothing remarkable except the multitudes of flamingoes, pelicans, and wild fowl in the lakes we passed. It is a great nuisance having to change ships. I have got so accustomed to the *Rohilla*, and the captain is such a good fellow that I am quite sorry to leave him. I doubt if the *Nizam* will be as pleasant.

S.S. *Nizam*: December 22.

Yesterday we had adventures. At 10.30 the machinery broke down; something had got into the cylinder. At first they thought it would only be an affair of half an hour, but in the end we did not start again until seven in the evening. In the meantime we had church on deck, the captain doing clergyman; and after that there was great excitement over some sharks which were swimming about the ship. In the clear water we could see them beautifully, each attended by a shoal of pilot fish, a most beautiful creature about the size of a 10-lb. salmon and streaked with the brightest blue. The sailors fixed a piece of pork on a hook at the end of a chain, and instantly hooked one. Such a business to get him on board! — and he flapped about finely, making us all beat a hasty retreat, in which two or three unfortunate people were knocked down and trampled on. Then we caught another, and after that a very large one, which turned out to be 7 ft. 6 in. long and weighed 210 lbs. This one had three live sharks inside, which we cut out and handed round. The vitality of these brutes is extraordinary. After their tails had been cut off and their insides taken out they kept flapping and struggling, and the heart of one placed on a bit of wood kept beating for hours.

In the meantime the *Rohilla*, which left Suez after us, came in sight and, seeing something was wrong, bore down. Captain Barrett and his chief engineer came on board, and there was much joy at meeting again, and drinks were partaken of. As they found we could go on again in a short time they departed and steamed away, and were soon out of sight; and then we felt gloomy, as it was quite uncertain whether the machinery would not collapse again, and if it did we should have no *Rohilla* to pick us up, and might be days in the Red Sea. But while we were at dinner another ship appeared, and this turned out to be the *Rohilla*, which felt nervous about us and had come back. Much relief was experienced at this amiability and soon after, after much struggling, our machinery was in motion; but this delay

will make us get to Aden in the dark, which is most tiresome.

Government House, Bombay: January 1, 1885.

We got here Tuesday morning early, after a very pleasant voyage across the Indian Ocean. I found the Governor's carriage waiting at the dock, and we came up here. Sir James Ferguson is most kind and pleasant and so are all the Staff. I have not done any sight-seeing yet, except going into Bombay and walking about the streets and looking at the people, an endless source of interest. It would be quite useless my endeavouring to describe to you my impression of this town. The complete novelty and originality of everything is remarkable, and one is never tired of staring and wondering. I cannot tell you how much I am enjoying myself or how much I wish you were with me. The Bombay Club asked me to a dinner but I declined, as there would have been speeches and more or less of a political demonstration against the Ripon party, which would never have done. I did not come out to India to pursue politics or to make speeches.

January 9.

We have been going about a great deal, seeing various things and people. Sir Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy, a great Parsee, took us to see the Towers of Silence, where they place all the dead Parsee bodies to be eaten by vultures. I was asked to write my opinion of their process in their books, and composed a highly qualified and ambiguous impression which would have done credit to Gladstone.

Last night we dined at the Byculla Club with several gentlemen, when an American lady gave us some very dull recitations from Tennyson; we were all much bored. I had a long interview with eight of the leading native politicians on Wednesday morning on Indian politics, in which they set forth with great ability their various grievances. We leave to-night for Indore, and after that go to Jaipur, Agra, Delhi and Lucknow, which last place we hope to reach about the 21st. From there I go to spend a week or ten days with Colonel

Murray in the district which he administrates, somewhere on the borders of Nepaul. We shall be in camp, and moving about every day, and I shall be able to see something of the details of Indian administration and also lots of sport; but of this last I shall be a spectator rather than an actor. You have no idea how extraordinarily polite people are out here, and what trouble they take to amuse me.

The Residency, Indore: January 14.

We were met at the junction for Indore by Captain F., of Holkar's service, who informed us that Holkar was away from his capital and was ill, but would come to a station near and meet us; and presently there we found him, drawn up with all his Court. We had an interview of about half an hour, while the other unfortunate passengers were kept waiting. He was most gracious and very intelligent, and when we left he embraced me. At Indore we found his son, also drawn up, and more *pow-wow*. In the evening fire-works, Hindoo drama, Nautch, conjurers, &c. All very Hindoo and delightful the first time one sees it, but I can quite imagine that after a time it would pall. In the morning Holkar sent us out cheetah-hunting for black buck; however, the cheetah was sulky and would not run well, so did not catch one. We then took our rifles, and I shot three and Thomas two.

The Residency, Lucknow: January 24, 1885.

Poor Fred Burnaby's death[1] is a great blow to me, and it was so sad getting his letter enclosed in yours this morning. I wrote to him as I passed through Egypt; I wonder if he got my letter. I shall miss him greatly. I see Airlie has been wounded, but am delighted not to find the names of any more of our friends in the list of casualties. I have had a most exasperating letter from Wolff, saying that he has a great deal to tell me, but that it is so important he cannot

[1] Colonel Burnaby was killed in action at Abu Klea, January 18, 1885.

write it for fear the letter should be lost. Did you ever know such tiresomeness?

I have no intention to hasten my return in order to increase the embarrassments of the Government. I am starting off to-night for Colonel Murray's camp.

In camp Dudna: February 1.

Here we are in camp in the middle of an immense Government forest at the foot of the Himalayas. We have been leading a very enjoyable life since we left Lucknow and Colonel Murray. Out all day careering round on elephants after game, sleeping in tents at night, always at a different place, always hungry for breakfast, very hungry for dinner — two sensations to me which have the attraction of novelty. The whole thing is a charming change after racketing about in railways from town to town. We have not seen much game, I must admit, as it is far too early in the year and, no grass being burnt and much water being about, the wild animals are very widely scattered, and shots are few and far between; though yesterday we hunted one leopard which ultimately escaped after being much fired at and, I think, grievously wounded. I shot a very nice swamp deer and Thomas a nilghai or blue bull. We also shot pea-fowl, bustards and partridges, and every variety of bird. We have fifteen elephants, and these creatures are an unfailing source of interest and amusement. I think an elephant is the best mode of conveyance I know. He cannot come to grief; he never tumbles down nor runs away (at least, not on the march); nothing stops him; and when you get accustomed to his paces he is not tiring. You would not believe what steep places they get up and down or what thick, almost impenetrable jungle they go through. If a tree is in the way, and not too large a one, they pull it down; if a branch hangs too low for the howdah to go under, they break it off. They are certainly most wonderful animals, and life in many parts of India would be impossible without them. The scenery all round here is lovely—very wild, and with splendid wood-

land effects. We have spent more days in camp here than we meant, which has altered our plans a little, but I like so much seeing the country and the people.

What explosions these are in London! I think it very amiable of the dynamite people to blow up the House of Commons when we are all away; they might have chosen a more inconvenient moment.

To his Mother.

Government House, Calcutta: February 8.

I have had the great good fortune to kill a tiger. It was our last day, and the party proposed to shoot ducks and snipe; but for that I did not much care and suggested that I and a Mr. Hersey (an English gentleman who is living in the district) should go into the forest on the chance of seeing deer and perhaps getting a sambur-stag, while the others went to shoot ducks. This was agreed to, and the others bet fifty rupees they would have the heaviest bag. Well, Hersey and I, each on an elephant and accompanied only by two other elephants, were beating an open space in the forest when I came upon the recently killed carcase of a hog, half devoured. Hersey, when he saw it, declared it was quite fresh, and that the tiger must be close by. You may imagine the excitement. We beat on through the place and then came through it again, for it was very thick high grass. All of a sudden out bundled this huge creature, right under the nose of Hersey's elephant, and made off across some ground which was slightly open. Hersey fired, and missed. I fired, and hit him just above the tail. (A very good shot, for he only showed me his stern, and he was at least forty yards off.) Hersey then fired his second barrel, and broke his shoulder, which brought him up (literally with a round turn). He took refuge in a patch of grass about fifty yards from us, where we could just see bits of him. Heavens, how he growled and what a rage he was in! He would have charged us but that he was disabled by Hersey's last shot. We

remained still, and gave him four or five more shots, which, on subsequent examination, we found all told; and then, after about five minutes' more awful growling, he expired. Great joy to all. The good luck of getting him was unheard of at this time of year; the odds were a hundred to one against such a thing. He was a magnificent specimen, nine feet seven inches in length, and a splendid skin — which will, I think, look very well in Grosvenor Square. This is certainly the acme of sport. I never shall forget the impression produced by this huge brute breaking cover; or, indeed, the mingled joy and consternation of the other party when they saw him — for they had to pay up fifty rupees. They had got a black buck and a blue bull, and thought they had certainly won.

Tigers in the Zoo give one very little idea of what the wild animal is like.

Government House, Calcutta: February 10.

I hope to leave Bombay March 20th and return *viâ* Marseilles, in which case I should be back in London about the 11th or 12th April. I do not think I shall be able to stop in Paris, as I guess the House of Commons will be just reassembling after Easter, and it would be a good moment to drop in upon that body. It is extremely pleasant here. The Dufferins are very kind and easy-going; the Staff, too, are amiable; and Bill Beresford does everything he can for one. Yesterday the Government telegraphed to Dufferin to despatch a brigade of Indian troops and thirty miles of railway plant to Suakim. Great preparations at once made; late at night comes an order from London countermanding the whole thing. Dufferin, diplomatist that he is, could not conceal his disgust at this vacillation when they handed him the telegram on our return from dinner. I telegraphed to Borthwick, and I hope I put the fat in the fire.

Rewah: February 17.

I got a telegram from Wolff yesterday, through Pender, saying that affairs were pressing and a crisis impending, and

inquiring when I was coming back. *Mais je connais mon Wolff*; he has crisis on the brain and, in any case, no political contingency will hasten my return by an hour. I expect the Government will try and get put out and the Tories will try to come in; I wish them joy of it.

On Sunday morning General Roberts turned up, and we had a jolly day; lots of talk. The General is all I had imagined him to be. He is very keen on taking me up the frontier to Peshawar and Quetta. It would be most pleasant if it could come off, and one would learn a great deal about that most mysterious problem, 'the dangers of the Russian advance'; but there is no chance of it.

Benares: February 24.

This place is the most distinctly Hindoo city I have yet seen; old and curious in every part. We are leaving for one of the Maharajah's palaces, or villa rather. We are extremely *bien logés et nourris*, with a retinue of servants and carriages at all times ready. There is an old Rajah, Siva Prasad, an interesting and experienced old man who acts as guide; he speaks English perfectly, though at the top of his voice, and indulges in endless dissertations on Indian politics. Yesterday morning we started off to see the Maharajah's royal palace of Rannugger. Very great reception; all the retainers, elephants, horses, &c., together with army — the latter about 100 strong — drawn up in a long avenue from the gates to the door. The army gave a royal salute, and the band played 'God save the Queen,' which I had to receive with gravity and dignity; rather difficult! The Maharajah's grandson, a boy of ten, met us at the door, and his son, a man of thirty, half-way up the staircase; such are the gradations of Oriental etiquette. The Maharajah was not there, as he is old and infirm, and was keeping himself for the evening. Then Nautch girls and mummers, which, so early in the morning, were out of place; and so on.

Later we took a boat, came down the Ganges, and saw all the Benares people bathing — thousands. As you know,

this is part of their religion. The water is very dirty, but they lap up quantities of it, as it is very 'holy'; also there were to be seen the burning Ghats, where all the dead are cremated. There were five bodies burning, each on its own little pile of faggots; but the whole sight was most curious and I am going again this morning to have another look. Benares is a very prosperous city, as all the rich people from all parts of India come here to spend the end of their days. Any Hindoo who dies at Benares, and whose ashes are thrown into the Ganges, goes right bang up to heaven without stopping, no matter how great a rascal he may have been. I think the G.O.M. ought to come here; it is his best chance.

In the evening the Maharajah gave a party to all the native notabilities of the city; great attendance of Baboos. Many of them speak English, and some appear to be very clever men, but I have had so much *pow-wow* that I did not talk to them much. I discovered a great scandal here the evening of my arrival. I found the magistrate and police were impressing Bheesties, or water-carriers, for service in the Soudan; great consternation in the profession, and all the Bheesties were hiding and were being actively hunted up by the police. I investigated the matter, questioned the head of the police, and went and saw three of the victims for the Mahdi. The poor creatures fell at my feet in the dust, screaming not to go. I was very angry, and telegraphed it to Sir Alfred Lyall, the Lieutenant-Governor of the North-West Provinces, and an inquiry is being made which will, I hope, save these unfortunate persons from a service to them terrible. This little incident of our rule goes far to explain why we make no progress in popularity among the people.

Jaipur: March 3, 1884–5.

We only remained at Delhi two days, as the hotel was piggy, and we moved to the Club at Agra, which is very comfortable, with excellent food and wine. This also gave us the opportunity of seeing the 'Taj' by moonlight, which we

were not able to do last time, and which is an unequalled sight. Also we went to dine at the house of a native judge — a very interesting and clever man; we met a most curious collection of native notabilities. The natives are much pleased when one goes to their houses, for the officials out here hold themselves much too high and never seek any intercourse with the natives out of official lines; they are very foolish.

We go on to-night to Baroda, where the Guicowar is organising a tiger hunt. I almost think I am getting a little tired of travelling, and shall be glad to find myself on board ship.

B-Churchill/Churchill Winston

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